

THE RHETORIC OF OPPOSITIONAL GENDER: *BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL* AS
PERSPECTIVE BY INCONGRUITY

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ABSTRACT

DANIEL CORDARO: The Rhetoric of Oppositional Gender: *Beyond Good and Evil* as

Perspective by Incongruity

(Under the direction of Cori Dauber)

This study focuses on the significance of gender constructions in popular videogames, both in terms of how they are constituted rhetorically, and on how these constructions may be alternatively constructed. Utilizing critical methods growing out of the rhetorical theories of Kenneth Burke, this study critically analyzes what rhetorically constitutes popular, and often problematic, gender constructions in mainstream videogames. Building upon the work of various videogame theorists and scholars, the study also examines the possibilities of constituting alternative constructions of gender in videogames, particularly through the analysis of the game *Beyond Good and Evil* which exemplifies an oppositional rhetorical force toward common and stereotypical gender constructions utilized in contemporary videogames.

By engaging the common constructions of videogame gender, and the game *Beyond Good and Evil*, critically this study continues the argument against more traditionally patriarchal constructions of gender in favor of greater interactive freedom for the user in constructing gender identities.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the videogame has infiltrated American pop-culture, especially in the past five years as games sales have soared, reaching 7.3 billion dollars in revenue in 2004 (ESA, 2004). More and more people of all ages, genders, races, and classes are crowding game store aisles in search of a unique entertainment experience. The significance of this explosion of video game software and the content that it offers has recently become an issue among lawmakers and social critics. The attention paid to videogames is indicative of the social and cultural force of the videogame medium in the 21st century.

Studies of media in the 20th century were dominated by a focus upon film and television. As has been pointed out by many media scholars, including those studying videogames, the theoretical and methodological viewpoints of the last century do not necessarily offer the same clarity when applied to newer forms of media, including videogames. For the new millennium, it has become evident that fresh critical viewpoints must be adopted in order to respond to the ever-changing climate of technological development in media. In this work, I hope to make a critical assessment of the content and community of video games in America in order to both bring to light the rhetorical implications of videogame forms, and to suggest alternatives forms for the future. In order to achieve this, I will critically analyze particular game texts, enabling me to make larger statements about the videogame industry and its current discursive climate.

Context

Most criticism of videogames in the popular media focuses on the possibility of the effects and perpetuation of violence and violent tendencies of children and young adults that play videogames. Recently the U.S. Senate approved a bill introduced by Sen. Hillary Clinton and Sen. Joseph Lieberman entitled the, “Children and Media Research and Advancement Act” (CAMRA) which calls for the long term study of videogames and other media on children and their development (Graft, 2006). The discourse surrounding these Senators’ advocacy has focused on the problematic saturation of videogames with violence. What my experience with videogames and the surrounding community discourse has revealed, is that the violent content of these games should only be one focal point of critical investigation.

The very issue that initiated a response from Clinton and others stemmed from the now infamous “hot coffee” scandal which stemmed from one of the most popular games of the last five years, and which had nothing to do with violence (Feldman, 2005). The “hot coffee” debacle dealt with an exploit in the game that allowed users to unlock a narratively irrelevant mini-game (a diminutive arcade style game which is often included completely free of connection to a game’s primary narrative composition) in which the main character was controlled in selecting and performing sexual acts upon a seduced woman. On Clinton’s website, her platform includes her efforts to keep “fighting the culture of sex and violence in the media” (Clinton, 2005).

Therefore, the issue of questionable video game content is not limited to violence, although media sources often tend to emphasize this issue over others. The fact of the matter is that as ubiquitous as game violence has become, the nature of sexual content in videogames is equally ubiquitous. One layer of this sexual content is that of the stereotypical

presentations (or representations) of gender and gender roles in videogames, which includes blatant examples of sexism, patriarchy, and misogyny which I perceive to be as problematic as videogame violence. The problematic representations of gender in contemporary videogames therefore warrant further investigation, which is the basis of my study. Understanding the great social capital of videogames, my research will demonstrate the ubiquity of problematic constructions of gender while pointing to their rhetorical significance. I then hope to illustrate how these representations are disrupted by forces that offer alternative constructions that counteract or subvert the more problematic ones. My critical analysis will be shaped by the work of Kenneth Burke, relying on several of his theoretical contributions.

Another commonality in the popular discourse of videogames is the mainstream media's focus on the effects of game content on children. The congressional hearings that led to the ESRB (Electronic Software Ratings Board) and the recent CAMRA bill have focused on advocating research into how games and their content affect children psychologically, in both the long and short term. There is undoubtedly value in such a study, even if issues with game content stretch beyond child psychology. If the videogame is, in fact, a medium, with its own forms of narrative, diegesis, visuals, apparatus, and experience, and if, as the ESA reports, there are more adults purchasing videogames than children (as suspect as these statistics may be) then critical work "reading" videogame texts and examining their discursive implications without focusing solely upon child audiences is necessary (ESA, 2004).

The initial task in my analysis is to demonstrate the uniquely narrow focus of the content of contemporary videogame texts, in order to illustrate the ubiquity of problematic gender constructions within these texts and the industry in general. My study will illustrate just how

limited the game industry has become in terms of the presentation of gender in videogames as well as offer a basis for alternative gender constructions through an analysis of a particular game text entitled, *Beyond Good and Evil*. My argument is that through utilizing alternative constructions of gender this game text actually serves to subvert the normalized gender conventions of the industry with its rhetorical force.

Literature Review

As McAllister (2004) illustrates, research into videogames and the surrounding discourse of videogames (what he deems the videogame complex), must deal with the “contradictions” of the many identities of videogames (p. 5). The many intersecting paths through which scholars examine games, including “games as mass media,” “Games as Economic Force,” “Games as Instructional Force,” and Games as Psychological Force,” must somehow be negotiated by scholars with a desire to study videogames (p.5). McAllister’s solution for negotiating these often contradictory intersections is to adopt a multi-perspective approach toward videogame study, merging literature and disciplines in order to carve out a niche in between them for the study of videogames. Acknowledging the work of McAllister, my study will utilize literature from various disciplines (or at least areas of study). As I have envisioned my research, it will add significantly to three major existing veins of academic study. First among the three that I which to impact is the burgeoning research discipline of videogame studies which has yet to forge a unique identity even among its media study counterparts. Second, the focus on gender representations and their problematic nature in contemporary videogames contributes to the study of gender communication, especially from a feminist perspective, which I will be adopting for this study. And finally, this work will

contribute to the literature of Burkean dramatism, which has been utilized for decades to critically analyze cultural texts of all kinds, but to my knowledge has yet to be utilized for an analysis of a videogame text. In the following paragraphs, I will illustrate the contribution of my study to these three fields in order to demonstrate its value and placement within current academic research by reviewing the relevant literature of the three.

I. Videogame studies

The study of videogames is relatively new, even though videogames themselves are not. As illustrated in Mark Wolf's (2001) meta-analysis of the academic study of videogames, it has become primarily the charge of scholars in the new millennium to engage the texts, forms, and surrounding discourses of the medium of the videogame. Many scholars find the origin of videogame research in the study of other popular media including film and television, as for example the 1999 work *Remediation* by Bolter and Grusin which situates the study of videogames along the same continuum as film, television, digital photography, hypertext, and myriad other contemporary media. Many of these early studies focused upon the medium itself, with particular attention to the way the experience of gaming is unique as a mediated filter of an alternate reality, including analysis of apparatus, the various tropes utilized by designers in imbuing perspective, and other primarily physical phenomena of gaming. With cultural scholars such as Henry Jenkins (1992), Maria Consalvo (2002), and Steven Poole (2004), the focus within the growing discipline of videogame studies has shifted toward the cultural implications of videogames, taking into consideration their significant contribution to the cultural landscapes of an increasing number of cultural communities.

It is with this cultural analysis that my research is primarily concerned. With the inception in January 2006 of the academic journal titled, “Games and Culture” the research concerned primarily with the cultural contributions of videogames has found its new point of convergence. Although the journal is merely a year old, it has significantly contributed to the study of videogames as cultural phenomena, and has tackled substantial social issues linked to videogames such as racial representations, the addictive properties of games, the legal and ethical implications of videogames, and many others. Due to the growing cultural force of videogames and the emphasis that these games place on socially volatile issues, there has been a recent focus of scholarship centering on the textual representations of women in videogames. For years scholars such as Mary Flanagan (2002) have untangled the representation of women in digital media with particular attention to the ways in which these representations serve to objectify, infantilize, and marginalize women within the digital worlds of videogames. While Flanagan is primarily a media scholar and utilizes media scholarship as the basis for study, my research will retain a rhetorical focus in my deconstruction of gender representations in videogames which has only seen its inception within the realm of videogame studies through the work of scholars such as Haynes (2006).

In terms of the textual analysis of videogames as discursive formations, I have turned to other videogame scholars who have attempted the same ambitious undertaking. Mia Consalvo (2002) sought to identify the gender constructions working beneath the surface of the game text *Final Fantasy IX*. In her analysis, Consalvo identifies key cultural connections that are made between the gender of the characters and their visual and social contexts. She then makes an effort to identify in the text the significant language, visual forms, game settings, and narrative constructions that illustrate particular forms of gender representation

within the game text. Similarly, I will endeavor in my study to seek out comparable linkages in terms of videogame content in order to discover the active gender constructions present in the game text I have chosen to use, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Consalvo uses the results of her textual analysis to make broader assessments of the cultural working of the videogame industry as a whole which is a shared goal of my project.

While much research, both academic and popular, seeks to illustrate the problematic representations of gender in popular videogames, my research will additionally attempt to offer alternative constructions of gender. My hope is that future study will be able to identify similar problematic representations, while also offering positive constructions and alternative representations that will help games continue on their path forward as a “legitimate cultural” art form (Gee, 2006). My study will seek to offer constructions and linkages in games that other scholars may then bring to their study of videogames as well. In 2006, David Leonard identified the great need for, and importance of, gender and race based game studies. According to Leonard, these studies should advance more productive game critiques, bring critical assessments of race and gender to the forefront of game culture studies, and identify ways in which videogames may be more culturally inclusive so as to further legitimate the burgeoning art form (as more than just play). For Leonard these studies will enable a better videogame universe as opposed to one rife with sexism, racism, homophobia, and white supremacy. In line with Leonard’s expectations for future videogame study, my research will begin the task of illustrating the possibility of undermining the sexism and problematic gender constructions currently ubiquitous within the game industry through the rhetorical analysis of game texts.

II. Critical feminism

My research into the gender constructions of videogames will rely on two pivotal premises of critical feminist study. The first is that gender is a contingent and constructed cultural phenomenon. The second premise is that mass media (including videogames) are a key force in creating, shaping, and perpetuating these constructions with mass media audiences (Dow, 2006). As other feminist media critics have suggested, the changing of these mass mediated constructions would concurrently help to change the lives of women in society (Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1978). In my study, I hope to illustrate how cultural constructions of gender are partially shaped by popular videogames and the way alternative constructions might just as easily be generated that could serve to act against the formal ones with rhetorical force. By illustrating the rhetorical implications of such oppositional constructions of gender, perhaps future videogame texts will offer improved constructions that may additionally help to change social attitudes about gender.

In terms of gender critique, the identification and study of patriarchal and ethnocentric constructions within popular media is nothing new. In the 1970's feminist authors produced prolific studies of the constructions of gender, sex, and race in mass media outlets (Gross & Jeffries-Fox, 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Rosen, 1974). These studies focused on the construction of gendered identities within popular film and television. As Dow (1990) explains, there have been and continue to be numerous dialectical perspectives extant under the banner of "feminist media critique" (p. 262). Along with the disparate goals of these many perspectives, there are similarly disparate methodologies at work toward forging new critiques in feminist media studies. However, I will utilize a feminist perspective similar to that of Dow (1990) in critically engaging with a specific text acknowledging its place within

a greater social context in order to make larger statements about the dominant creative forces driving the industry as a whole.

As Consalvo (2006) states, “Studying the intersections of gender and new media research is critical to the advancement of the field of gender and communication generally.” It is in this ground between gender and new media studies that I hope to establish a platform for future conversations about the constructions of gender within popular videogames. In the same chapter, Consalvo relates the need for critical gender studies of new media from many different research perspectives and with new points of emphasis for the future. My study will implement a multi-perspective approach toward videogames, fusing together the method of dramatism and the foundation of critical feminist study.

III. Burkean dramatism

James Paul Gee (2005), said that videogames constituted a new art form and that the Burkean conception of “equipment for living” would be a useful theoretical lens for the future study of videogames (p. 120). Gee invites scholars to utilize alternative methodologies such as Burkean dramatism to further investigate the rhetorical, cultural, and artistic implications of these games. Burkean dramatism makes for a useful framework for my study that allows me not only to analyze texts with critical Burkean tools, but also to then illustrate the rhetorical significance of these texts culturally.

From a methodological standpoint, the work of Kenneth Burke offers a way into studying texts as rhetorical acts while simultaneously assessing the discursive implications of these acts. Burkean criticism became a popular means of analysis after the work of Ed Black largely silenced the neo-Aristotelian method of critique, which to that point had been the primary means of analyzing public address (King, 2001). As rhetorical scholarship branched

out beyond the study of public address, the remainder of the 20th century saw Burkean methodology used to analyze nearly all forms of cultural texts, ensuring the validity of Burkean dramatistic methodology amongst its post-modern counterparts.

Relevant literature revolving around the use of Burkean criticism toward new media texts is scarce. However, many scholars have used the work of Kenneth Burke as a lens for critically engaging media texts. For example Barry Brummett (1985), used the Burkean conception of literature as “equipment for living” to illustrate the rhetorical salience of horror films as cultural texts. This work is an excellent example of the usage of Burkean dramatism in analyzing texts in order to make larger statements about culture. Rockler (2002) illustrates how the Burkean concept of “perspective by incongruity” could be utilized as a means of forging better media literacy among children. Rockler’s piece describes how Burkean concepts illustrate the rhetorical salience of media texts. Studies such as Brian Snee’s (2005) and Mark Steiner’s (2001) illustrate how dramatism provides a framework for describing the rhetorical significance of popular films, again critically engaging media texts in an effort to illustrate larger cultural principles surrounding the texts. To my knowledge, as of this writing, no videogame text has been engaged using Burkean methodology. However the absence of Burkean videogame analysis is not in and of itself justification for using Burke as a theoretical lens.

McAllister (2004) recognized the use of Kenneth Burke’s dramatism for the study of videogames and is, to my knowledge, the only scholar that has attempted to forge Burkean dramatism and the study of videogames. McAllister explains that Burkean dramatism allows the analysis of game texts to become more than simple, “hermeneutic exercises”, so that statements may be made about the cultural contribution of these texts (p.32). McAllister uses

Burke to develop a “grammar of gamework,” in order to engage the dialectical tension between game texts themselves and more broad conceptions of game (and societal) culture, which he then hopes will be taken up by videogame scholars. My study does just that, not by simply analyzing a game text by using the theoretical lens of Kenneth Burke, but to utilize the Burkean framework to make much larger assessments of videogame culture. Therefore, I see this project as contributing less to the myriad of research projects that have used Burke almost as a hermeneutic tool of textual interpretation, and more to expand the usefulness of Burkean dramatism toward videogames as cultural phenomena that carry significant rhetorical salience.

Object and Terms of Study

My preliminary objective will be to determine how contemporary videogames in general construct gender roles within the texts of the videogames themselves and in the surrounding discursive universe of videogames (the videogame complex). Realizing that a complete statement of the “state” of contemporary videogame design and its gender constructions could require a complete study in and of itself, I will simply attempt to illustrate how videogames construct gender norms and roles as a contextual backdrop for my study of *Beyond Good and Evil*. If I am to illustrate how this game works against the conventional constructions of the industry, I must conversely show just what the game stands in opposition to. In order to do so, I will illustrate what I believe to be a problematic, overly narrow focus of the videogame industry using both the work of videogame scholars and contemporary examples from game texts. I will also point toward this narrow focus of the industry in regard

to gender constructions as formal conventions that the industry repetitively and conventionally relies upon for its representations of gender in videogames.

The heart of my project involves the analysis of the videogame text *Beyond Good and Evil*, which I believe to embody a host of alternative gender constructions beyond and against those typical of the current industry conventions.

It is important to first discuss videogame genres. *Beyond Good and Evil* is an uncommon game in many aspects. However it does embody common elements of the action adventure genre of videogames which I will explain in my project. While I expect my findings to represent the industry as a whole, the reality is that my findings will be more applicable to the action adventure genre of videogames. Other genres may prove to yield quite different results, and may therefore prove excellent material for future studies. However, in my analysis, I will attempt to include examples from the action adventure genre so as to expand the scope of my project.

I hope to illustrate the many ways in which *Beyond Good and Evil* serves to stand in opposition to the problematic standards of gender construction which dominate the contemporary videogame industry. Particular points of interest include character design and appearance, rule construction, narrative, dialogue, as well as other elements of the game.

Methods and Research Questions

Preliminary research questions include: Are there common linkages in contemporary videogames that speak toward the constitution of gender or gender roles? Do these ubiquitous constructions pose a larger problem than simply a lack of creativity within contemporary game design? If the narrow focus of the industry indeed creates problematic

constructions of gender that are then consumed by a mass-media audience, how might it be possible to disrupt these constructions? Does the game *Beyond Good and Evil* offer a Burkean perspective by incongruity, or an oppositional force against the problematic constructions of the industry? How might future games serve the purpose of disrupting these constructions?

My method for analysis of the game *Beyond Good and Evil* is derived from the early work of Kenneth Burke; primarily Counter-Statement and Permanence and Change. In the following chapter dedicated to method, I will specifically deal with the theoretical contributions of Burke that are relevant to my analysis in this project.

My focus will then shift to the *Beyond Good and Evil* text specifically. What kind of sexuality is presented in this game and to what degree? Are there images that are linked with certain other images, activities, or dialogs? What are the discourses surrounding the sexual imagery in this game? Are there norms that accompany such a use of sexual imagery or gender constructions? All of these questions will begin to take shape as I begin to identify what in fact constitutes the gendered forms of the game. To achieve the required analysis of *Beyond Good and Evil*, I will play through the game, being careful to take note of any and all significant clues about the presentation of sexuality and the construction of gender within the text (Rose, 2001). After an initial playing, it may be necessary to replay significant moments of the game in order to better grasp the significance. After sufficient data is collected from my qualitative observation of the game, I will then be able to fashion particular understandings about patterns of form that are involved within the text of the game and comparing these formal attributes to the qualities of the genre the game “complex” in general. It is at this point that I expect to find that there is a strong statement about gender

that is being made in the images within, and through the playing of *Beyond Good and Evil* which is oppositional to those of the videogame “complex” in general.

Section Outline

My thesis project is constituted by three subsequent chapters, which I will outline and discuss briefly here.

- Method – This section will describe in detail the Burkean frameworks which constitute my methods of analysis for the project. I will further expand on the definition and function of the Burkean concepts of form, orientation, occupational psychosis, perspective by incongruity, and equipment for living.
- Analysis – This section will include my reading of the videogame text in detail. This section will also serve to illustrate on a point-by-point basis what kinds of gender conventions make up a Burkean “occupational psychosis.” I will use this section to illustrate the discursive contributions of *Beyond Good and Evil* in order to illustrate its disruptive properties toward the previously observed formal properties of the industry.
- Conclusion – In this section I will reflect upon my analysis and seek to point to future implications of videogame research that my project provides.

Limitations

While many of the elements of videogames are not media specific per se, it is important to understand that videogames constitute a media inextricably linked with technology. This technology constantly changes, which requires additional tools, and means of analysis for

future study. Any study of videogames must be placed into its historical context, in terms of its technological moment. My study is therefore a statement about the “state” of videogames at a very specific moment in time and is therefore not intended to be representative of other contextual settings.

Although there are many platforms available for the play of this game, I have chosen the Microsoft Xbox as my gaming platform of choice since it is the most readily available for my use, and because it offers the most detailed graphical imagery for my selected videogame text. Although this title is available for other platforms, my analysis of the videogame text itself is independent of the specific apparatus utilized to read it. While playing a videogame on a PC is certainly different than on a console such as Xbox in terms of apparatus, my focus on the discursive constructions in terms of narrative, rules, visual presentation, and diegetic contexts are universal across platforms. It is not my purpose with this research to argue the differences of gaming with a console system such as the Xbox and a PC, nor do I believe that my analysis is limited to a particular gaming apparatus despite any and all differences that might exist. The method chapter of this project includes a section, which further explains my choices for videogame apparatus selection and the ramifications of these choices.

My argument deals specifically with gender constructions within texts. It is therefore not my task to take up specific audiences of these constructions, or particular effects of these constructions that I will describe in my research. Future research should be done to explore the possibilities of the problematic constructions within game texts and particular audiences; among gender communities, demographic communities, racial communities, and cultural communities. This future work might also be able to provide insight into effects on audiences or provide answers to more quantitative questions.

Beyond Good and Evil is one game text among thousands. My analysis of the industry as a whole will consist of the critical engagement of many other game texts in addition to *Beyond Good and Evil* in order to better illustrate the contextual landscape of contemporary videogame texts. I rely on the nature of *Beyond Good and Evil* as one particularly unique game text so that I may illustrate how one small text may serve to subvert the formal constructions of the vast majority of game texts. I have no doubt that other texts do exist that promote unique opposition to the occupational psychosis of the game industry which will in fact embody the same attributes and discursive forces of *Beyond good and Evil*. My task is not to identify these texts, nor to quantify them, both of which would constitute the sampling of hundreds, if not thousands, of videogame texts. My task is instead to illustrate how one text may act as an oppositional force that then may intersect and/or serve as an example for game creators on how their texts may do the same work. My hope is that my analysis of *Beyond Good and Evil* will resonate with other videogame texts that serve the same purpose. Future research might also look into how these oppositional texts come to colonize the discursive landscape of popular videogames, although this is not the task of my research. Therefore I have no reliance on *Beyond Good and Evil* as a “representational” sample text, although I do feel as though other games do and will exhibit the same and different properties that serve similar or the same discursive forces as it does.

As illustrated earlier, *Beyond Good and Evil* represents primarily the action genre of videogames. I hope to illustrate in my meta-analysis of the industry the ubiquity of problematic gender constructions industry wide. My purpose does not include making a statement about videogame genre or how *Beyond Good and Evil* typifies a particular genre. I am simply attempting to illustrate how one game, from one genre, might serve to subvert the

constructions of a much greater array of texts regardless of genre. Future research might further illustrate the limited nature of genre in regard to the study of videogames and its effects upon gender, racial, and class constructions in videogames.

It is also important to note that I am in no way attempting to illustrate how videogames cause violence or sexism. To link causality of these texts to much larger social problems would require a removal of all agency from the user, disallowing their ability to critically engage with texts. This conception is covered at length by Brummett (1985). I am simply attempting to illustrate how the game industry has, through an occupational psychosis, created a playing environment wrought with sexism which is one portion of larger patriarchal discourses in contemporary popular culture.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

As McAllister (2004) illustrates, research into videogames and the discourse surrounding videogames (what he deems the videogame complex), must deal with the “contradictions” of the many identities of videogames (p. 1). The many intersecting paths through which scholars examine games, including “games as mass media,” “Games as Economic Force,” “Games as Instructional Force,” and “Games as Psychological Force,” all must somehow be negotiated by scholars who desire to study videogames (p.5). McAllister’s solution for negotiating these often contradictory intersections is to adopt a multi-perspectival approach toward videogame study, merging disciplines in order to carve out a niche in between them for the study of videogames. Similarly, Juul (2005) describes his utilization of “as many different fields as possible” in his investigation of videogames which results in part from the unclear nature of a “proper” research discipline with which to study the medium (p. 7). Juul acknowledges the voices of many research disciplines in order both to carve out a place for videogame studies in between existing research disciplines, and also to provide a more complete analysis relevant to these various veins of study. Acknowledging the work of McAllister and Juul, my analysis draws from and adds to the literature of three existing lines of academic investigation.

In terms of method, my analysis draws primarily from the early theoretical work of Kenneth Burke in his dramatistic investigations of the rhetorical nature of literature and

human action. I will further explain the specific theoretical contributions of Burke and their methodological implications later in this section. To a lesser extent, my analysis draws on two other academic fields of investigation for research methodology. First among these is the burgeoning research discipline of videogame studies which has yet to forge a unique identity in terms of academic discipline. I will now briefly describe the work in videogame studies that has modeled my own analysis of videogames.

Videogame studies

The study of videogames is relatively new, as is the medium of videogames itself, spanning the better part of two decades. As illustrated in Mark Wolf's (2001) meta-analysis of the academic study of videogames, it has become primarily the charge of scholars in the new millennium to engage the texts, forms, and surrounding discourses of the medium of the videogame. Many scholars find the origin of videogame research in the study of other popular media including film and television, as for example the 1999 work *Remediation* by Boulter and Grusin which situates the study of videogames along the same continuum as film, television, digital photography, hypertext, and myriad other contemporary media. Many of these early studies focused upon the medium itself, with particular attention to the way the experience of gaming is unique as a mediated filter of an alternate reality, including analysis of apparatus, the various tropes utilized by designers in imbuing perspective, and other primarily physical phenomena of gaming. With cultural scholars such as Henry Jenkins (1992), Maria Consalvo (2002), and Steven Poole (2004), the focus within the growing discipline of videogame studies has shifted toward the cultural implications of videogames,

taking into consideration their significant contribution to the cultural landscapes of an increasing number of communities.

Traditionally when videogames were mentioned as objects of study they were categorized under the field of media studies, mostly under the marginalized “new media” designation (Wolf & Perron, 2003). Accordingly, the research methodologies utilized in videogame studies have reflected those of traditional media studies, these being semiotics, apparatus, ideology, and psychoanalysis (Rosen, 1986). As the medium of the videogame has become more prominent and the cultural weight and effects of the medium have come further into question, videogame scholars have reached out to many research disciplines in order to begin to answer questions about videogames in an alternative way to that of media studies. As a result, videogame studies today rely on methodologies from numerous academic fields while videogame scholars attempt to better situate the growing literature of videogame studies within its own unique position as a research field.

McAllister (2004) begins his investigation of videogames by asking the basic question of how videogames might be studied methodologically. As stated earlier, he identifies five general areas of study, each defining a particular “perspective” into the videogame as an object of study, designed to shed light on the methodological approaches with which to approach videogame studies. These perspectives include the study of games as mass culture, mass media, instructional force, psychophysiological force, and as economic force. The first step according to McAllister is to decide among the five “areas of power” in order to focus research and critical attention (p. 2). My analysis is primarily concerned with the cultural implications or “force,” as Mcallister puts it, within a mass cultural context. In this regard, my analysis is aligned most closely with the “games as mass culture” category of research. In

order to better understand this choice of research focus, I will now explain the methodological implications of such a distinction.

Exploring videogames as sites of “mass culture” involves the acknowledgement of videogames as having cultural force primarily because they are popular. While there are certainly many implications surrounding the meaning of “popular,” McAllister settles on popular as meaning a text that is primarily intended for the consumption by millions across numerous cultural and geographic divides (p. 12). In other words, videogames as texts are reflective of those who consume them. However they are also reflective of those that have created them. Videogames are produced by individuals preoccupied with their eventual popularity. In other words, a consideration of videogames as texts of mass culture allows for an analysis of the contributions (ideological and otherwise) of the few individuals that design and create videogames for mass media audiences. McAllister suggests that a critical focus upon videogame texts from a mass culture perspective will produce indications of the cultural contributions of the producers of the videogame itself. In other words, a critical analysis of videogame texts is not simply a hermeneutic exercise attempting to somehow decode the content of videogames and their effects, but involves a deconstruction of the content of videogames in order to partially point toward that all-important notion of Burke’s; the *motive* of the creators of the videogame. The analysis of videogames as mass culture does not end here.

Understanding videogame texts as sites of mass culture production acknowledges videogames as products that are produced with the primary intention of selling in a market economy. By alluding to the popularity of videogames as the fulcrum for their cultural force, critics are also able to better understand the culture of an audience that has the agency to

make a videogame popular. This conception speaks toward the “uses” of a videogame. By analyzing the cultural constructions of a videogame, the critic is also able to analyze the kinds of cultural elements that are received and rejected by certain cultural communities. In posing this as a question it is important to ask is not only “what is in this game that makes interesting to study?” but also “what does it say about a cultural community that receives this videogame text as overwhelmingly popular?” To this end, the critic is able to make larger statements about how the text is able to exert cultural force, contribute to discursive communities, and influence culture on many levels of society. My study uses the analysis of a videogame text in order to locate the rhetorical force of that text within cultural tensions surrounding gender. By embracing the focus upon games as mass culture, my study focuses upon the textual elements of *Beyond Good and Evil* and its culturally transformative properties, which are at their core rhetorical in nature.

This project is focused centrally around an analysis of gender constructions in videogames. To this end, I have looked to other scholars for input on a methodology for such an analysis. Scholars such as Mary Flanagan (2002) have untangled the representation of women in digital media with particular attention to the ways in which these representations serve to objectify, infantilize, and marginalize women within technological worlds. Flanagan’s research as a media scholar has exposed some of the patriarchal tendencies of new digital media.

While much research, both academic and popular, seeks to illustrate the problematic representations of gender in popular media, my research additionally provides alternative constructions of gender. By presenting these alternative constructions, I hope to illustrate the possibility of rhetorical opposition and transformation. Additionally, my study will offer

these alternatives as a juxtaposition particularly relevant for game designers, so that they may begin to better understand the choices that are made in developing popular videogames containing specific gender constructions. And lastly, through my study I will offer constructions and linkages in games that other scholars may then bring to their study of videogame texts. In 2006, David Leonard identified the great need for and the importance of gender and race based game studies. According to Leonard, these studies should advance more productive game critiques, bring critical assessments of race and gender to the forefront of game culture studies, and identify ways in which videogames may be more culturally inclusive so as to further legitimate the burgeoning art form (as more than just play). For Leonard these studies will enable a better videogame universe as opposed to one rife with sexism, racism, homophobia, and white supremacy. In line with Leonard's expectations for future videogame study, my research will begin the task of illustrating the possibility of undermining the sexism and problematic gender constructions currently ubiquitous within the game industry through the rhetorical analysis of game texts as mass cultural entities.

Mia Consalvo (2002) has worked more closely with the "videogames as mass culture" class of research through her identification and deconstruction of visual and narrative elements of videogame texts along the lines of gender and sex roles. In her analysis, Consalvo identifies key cultural connections that are made between the gender of the characters and their visual and social contexts. She then makes an effort to identify in the text the significant language, visual forms, game settings, and narrative constructions that illustrate particular forms of gender representation within game texts. Consalvo outlines an approach for studying videogame constructions of gender and sexuality. The first elements of this analysis involves the textual reading of videogames by investigating the "representations

of characters as they appear in games - the narratives and history offered, visuals, and situations found (including character dialogue, subplots, appearance, etc.)” (p. 173). Investigation of these elements of videogame texts allows the critic to explore the ways in which the texts utilize stereotypical representations of femininity. By deconstructing gender representations in videogame texts through the analysis of the stereotypical constructions of femininity, the critic is able to make larger statements about the cultural “work” of these texts. Utilizing the lens of videogames as mass culture, the constructions of gender within videogame texts become a larger cultural issues rather than simply a decoded message somehow hidden inside the text. As with the analysis of Consalvo, my study is intended to seek out comparable linkages in terms of videogame content in order to discover the active gender constructions present in the game text I have chosen to use. Consalvo’s study is utilized as a blueprint for my analysis of this videogame text.

My focus on gender representations and their problematic nature in contemporary videogames draws from and contributes to the study of gender communication, especially from a feminist perspective, which I will be adopting for this study. I will now underline the elements of critical feminist study that I will utilize in my analysis.

Videogames and Critical Feminism

My research into the gender constructions of videogames will rely on two pivotal premises of critical feminist study. The first is that gender is a contingent and constructed cultural phenomenon. The second premise is that mass media (including videogames) are a key force in creating, shaping, and perpetuating these constructions with mass media audiences (Dow, 2006). As other feminist media critics have suggested, the changing of these

mass mediated constructions would concurrently help to change the lives of women in society (Tuchman, Daniels, & Benét, 1978). In my study, I will illustrate how cultural constructions of gender are partially shaped by popular videogames and the way alternative constructions might just as easily be generated that could serve to act against the formal ones with rhetorical force.

In terms of gender critique, the identification and study of patriarchal and ethnocentric constructions within popular media is nothing new. In the 1970's feminist authors produced prolific studies of the constructions of gender, sex, and race in mass media outlets (Gross & Jeffries-Fox, 1978; Tuchman, 1978; Rosen, 1974). These studies focused on the construction of gendered identities within popular film and television. As Dow (1990) explains, there have been and continue to be numerous dialectical perspectives extant under the banner of "feminist media critique" (p. 262). Along with the disparate goals of these many perspectives, there are similarly disparate methodologies at work toward forging new critiques in feminist media studies. However, I will utilize a feminist perspective similar to that of Dow (1990) in critically engaging with a specific text, acknowledging its place within a greater social context in order to make larger statements about the dominant creative forces driving the industry as a whole.

As Consalvo (2006) states, "Studying the intersections of gender and new media research is critical to the advancement of the field of gender and communication generally." Consalvo also relates the need for critical gender studies of new media from many different research perspectives and with new points of emphasis for the future. My study will implement a multi-perspectival approach toward videogames, fusing together the method of dramatism and the foundation of critical feminist study.

Videogames and Burkean dramatism

James Paul Gee (2005) has said that videogames constituted a new art form and that the Burkean conception of “equipment for living” would be a useful theoretical lens for the future study of videogames (p. 120). Gee invites scholars to utilize alternative methodologies such as Burkean dramatism to further investigate the rhetorical, cultural, and artistic implications of these artistic games. Burkean dramatism makes for a useful framework for my study that not only allows for the analysis of texts with critical Burkean tools, but also to then illustrate the rhetorical significance of these texts culturally.

From a methodological standpoint, the work of Kenneth Burke offers a way into studying texts as rhetorical acts while simultaneously assessing the discursive implications of these acts. Burkean criticism became a popular means of analysis after the work of Ed Black largely supplanted the neo-Aristotelian method of critique, which to that point had been the primary means of analyzing public address (King, 2001). As rhetorical scholarship branched out beyond the study of public address, Burkean methodology was used to analyze nearly all forms of cultural texts, ensuring the validity of Burkean dramatism methodology amongst its post-modern counterparts.

Relevant literature revolving around the use of Burkean criticism towards new media texts is scarce. However, many scholars have used the work of Kenneth Burke as a lens for critically engaging media texts. For example Barry Brummett (1985), used the Burkean conception of literature as “equipment for living” to illustrate the rhetorical salience of horror films as cultural texts. This work is an excellent example of the use of Burkean dramatism in analyzing texts in order to make larger statements about culture. Rockler (2002) illustrates the way the Burkean concept of “perspective by incongruity” can be utilized in the classroom

as a means of forging better media literacy among children. Rockler's piece describes how Burkean concepts illustrate the rhetorical salience of media texts. Studies such as Brian Snee's (2005) and Mark Steiner's (2001) illustrate the way dramatism provides a framework for describing the rhetorical significance of popular films, again critically engaging media texts in an effort to illustrate larger cultural principles surrounding the texts. Snee (2005) utilizes Burke's concept of "consubstantiality" to explain the rhetorical salience of the film "The Last Temptation of Christ" for Christian audiences that otherwise might disagree with the premises of the film. Steiner (2001) draws upon Burke's ideas of rhetoric and representation to illustrate the rhetorical implication of the film "The Apostle" towards evangelical Christianity.

Surprisingly to my knowledge, as of this writing, no videogame text has been engaged using Burkean methodology. However the theoretical contributions of Burke are quite helpful in assessing the rhetorical salience of videogame texts. The work of Burke has become a staple of the study of rhetoric in analyzing texts of all varieties. With the rise in prominence of the videogame and the tendency to label contemporary videogame texts as artistic productions, the use of Burke as a theoretical method for analyzing videogames has never been more pertinent.

McAllister (2004) recognized the use of Kenneth Burke's dramatism for the study of videogames as a methodological lens. McAllister does not use Burkean methodology to study specific game texts, but instead utilizes it to develop a framework for studying videogames. According to McAllister, Burkean dramatism allows the analysis of game texts to become more than simple, "hermeneutic exercises", so that statements may be made about the cultural contribution (or the "work") of these texts (p.32). McAllister uses Burke to

develop a “grammar of gamework,” in order to engage the dialectical tension between game texts themselves and more broad conceptions of game (and societal) culture, which he then hopes will be taken up by other videogame scholars. By utilizing Burke as a theoretical lens, I am attempting just that kind of analysis following from the work of McAllister.

My method for analysis of the game *Beyond Good and Evil* is derived from the early work of Kenneth Burke; primarily Counter-Statement and Permanence and Change. In order to clarify the terminology of Burke which I utilize in my analysis, this section will focus primarily on the clarification of a few of the theoretical conceptions of Burke that are central to my analysis.

Much of the early work of Burke involved the exploration of the rhetorical function of artistic production. As a literary theorist, Burke became interested in identifying the ways in which art produced positive reactions from audiences. In essence, Burke (1931) was looking for what made art, especially fictional literature, rhetorically “designed for the express purpose of arousing emotions” (p. 123). Although written later in 1937, Burke identified literature as “equipment for living,” which has retrospectively become the cornerstone of Burke’s analysis of the function of literary art. In the essay “Literature as Equipment for Living,” Burke identifies the workings of proverbs as stories that present allegorical evidence for how to live everyday life, yielding new perspectives and performing a rhetorical and discursive function about these perspectives (Burke, 1967). The fictional examples provided by proverbs Burke refers to as yielding an “equipment for living” or a kind of fictional ideal which becomes the basis for realistic action by those that read the proverb and are persuaded by its message of advice. The logical leap presented in this essay has to do with the extension of the proverb is equipment for living to all artistic production, especially literature. In other

words, all works of art produce maxims of action that then (if rhetorically successful) influence the real lives of readers. This equipment for living provided by literature, may reaffirm worldviews, or challenge them. What is important is that literature has for Burke a powerful influence on the way human beings interpret the world around them if and only if literature is somehow persuasive in relating its message to the reader.

Burke is left with the question of what exactly makes art rhetorically successful. To answer this question Burke identifies the ways in which art enacts its influence upon its readers. The cultural “work” of artistic texts according to Burke in Counter-Statement and Permanence and Change lies within the author’s ability to utilize texts in order to create and then fulfill the expectations of the reader. Burke (1954) refers to this process as the “psychology of form” because the enactment of form (the creation and fulfillment of expectations) within a text is reliant upon its reception within the minds of the audience (p. 31). The form of an artistic work involves rhetorically creating expectations for an audience through the narrative, which then works to fulfill these expectations with a resolution of some kind based upon those expectations. For Burke, this is what creates the enjoyment of art and ultimately what allows art to rhetorically influence human action as equipment for living.

There are numerous forms identified by Burke in the *Lexicon Rhetoricae* section of Counter-Statement including repetitive form, qualitative progression, conventional form, and minor or incidental form (p. 124-127). For the purposes of this project it is most important to define conventional and repetitive form. Conventional form, as indicated by its nomenclature is composed of fulfilling conventional expectations of an audience. Conventional form is described by Burke as the form of “categorical expectancy” meaning that it plays toward

traditional expectations of similar kinds of narratives in the fulfillment of its form (p. 126). When one refers to the form of a novel, they are referring to a set of conventions that are traditionally utilized in composing the narrative elements of a novel. These traditional conventions are what constitute conventional form for Burke. An audience has an expectation of what should follow based solely on their knowledge of the conventional form of a particular narrative type. According to Burke, any other kind of form may become conventional in that it may become conventional as contexts and art continue to change over time. Of particular importance for this project in terms of the types of form identified by Burke is repetitive form. According to Burke, repetitive form is, “the consistent maintaining of new principles under new guises. It is the restatement of the same thing in different ways.” (p. 124). Repetitive form relies on the introduction of the same or similar elements that fulfill expectations simply by repeating those elements even if within new contexts. The comedic character that reestablishes their identity through the repetition of humorous dialogue in numerous and differing contexts is an example of utilizing repetitive form. The audience expects the character to react in a particular way due to the prior narrative repetition of the character’s behavior. These forms are constituted over time and may come into existence across many texts rather than through a single text. For example, what constitutes the conventions of conventional form will rely on preconceived notions of what is “proper,” which is derived over time through the reading of numerous texts. It is with this notion of what is “proper” in art that Burke concerns himself with the notion of piety.

The notion of piety for Burke is a kind of building block for artistic forms. It is one of the many terms defined by Burke that takes on a slightly different definition from the colloquial. In order for audiences to have their expectations aroused and then fulfilled, the audience

must first have a conception of just what is expected, or what should properly follow. But where does this notion of what is proper originate? Burke introduces the notion of piety as culturally normative linkages between concepts. For Burke, there are no necessary connections between any two concepts; any linkage between any two concepts is nothing more than a socially or culturally cultivated connection. Burke turns toward the notion of piety for a reason. The notion that certain behaviors are “pious,” in a religious sense means that these actions somehow are holy or appropriate under the regulation of religion. For Burke, the same is true for linkages between any two cultural conceptions. Racism is an excellent example. There is no tangible reason why a group of individuals would link a specific person or group of people with negative connotations or stereotypical conceptions except through the construction of certain notions of Burkean “piety.” What makes a particular racial group “bad” in the minds of another individual or group has to do with certain culturally and socially constructed linkages between that group and certain negative concepts. These linkages are therefore “pious” within the culture that espouses these ideals.

The notion of Burkean piety is connected to literary form in that it is when appealing to what is “pious” with audiences which allows art to fulfill the expectations of the audience, or in other words, to fulfill its form. Certain “pious” linkages become repetitive or conventional, thus resulting in forms that are utilized in art as such. What becomes pious for a cultural community is by definition a socially constructed and maintained phenomenon. Notions of piety and proper form become normalized over time through experience and relationships (Burke, 1954 p. 18). On the level of the individual, notions of piety come to constitute a unique lens with which individuals view the world. Burke identifies this interpretive lens possessed and utilized by each individual as that individual’s orientation.

Orientation, for Burke, is “a schema of serviceability”(Burke, 1954, p.21) or “a bundle of judgments as to how things were, how they are, and how they may be” (p.14). Orientations are built through the notions of what is deemed culturally pious. Individuals utilize their orientations as interpretive lenses with which they view the entire world around them, not only artistic texts. Burke utilizes the example of poor whites in the South sixty years after the Civil War viewing blacks as the scapegoat for their economic situation, and therefore resorting to lynching as the answer to their economic problems (p. 15). The scapegoating of blacks in the post-Civil War south therefore became a pivotal part of the orientations of many white Southerners. Burke illustrates with such an example that orientations act as “schemas of serviceability” for real-life cultural institutions and situations, as well as for the interpretation of the fulfillment of expectations by artistic work.

In terms of the function of art, the concept of form as the presentation and fulfillment of expectations and desires relies both upon the authors understanding of what an audience will deem pious, and the audience’s acceptance or rejection of artistic expectations as a function of their individual orientations. It is important to point out here that Burke affords great interpretive power to the concept of orientation. Orientations are built upon experience and relationships (both being understood in terms of piety), which makes them quite rigid and accordingly difficult to change. They are particularly difficult to change due to the Burkean concept of “occupational psychosis” (p. 37).

Occupational psychosis is a concept from the work of John Dewey, indicating the human tendency to understand a phenomenon in one way, and by doing so, to ignore alternative ways of understanding it (Burke, 1954 p.37-39). Recall that orientations are fixed over time. As orientations become more rigid the tendency for those orientations to change wanes

significantly, due to the fact that other ways of viewing the world are simply not needed. They are not required because of an occupational psychosis which produces a kind of closed mindedness among individuals and communities that have become used to viewing a phenomenon in a particular way. Occupational psychoses are created and maintained through the successful utilization of a particular worldview, thereby eliminating the possibility of other worldviews. Similar to the constitution of forms, occupational psychoses are not limited to an individual, but may be shared across discursive formations such as artistic texts among many individuals. Burke (1954) uses the example of an agrarian versus a metropolitan occupational psychosis, which generally dictates the policies created and advocated by each respective group, one obviously more rural in focus and the other more urban (p. 41).

It is important to note here that an occupational psychosis is neither a negative nor a positive force. They are simply constructed by their respective cultural communities with great rigidity as such. Even though Burke and Dewey identify occupational psychosis as a kind of powerful, discursive, and communal mentality, capable of producing complex ideological constructions, Burke highlights the fact that they are not permanent fixtures of the cultural landscape. Burke relies on the *change* in the title Permanence and Change for the means by which orientations and occupational psychoses are disrupted and ultimately changed over time. The *change* in this context is introduced by Burke as the concept of perspective by incongruity.

As powerful and rigid as orientations, occupational psychoses, and notions of piety may be, they are also contingent, malleable, and capable of dissolution rhetorically. Remember that orientations are built upon experience, but that they are also arbitrary in nature, meaning that there is no necessary symbolic connection between any concepts. For Burke, this means

that orientations are subject to change as new linkages between concepts are always possible, resulting in alternative alignments. The rhetorical process by which orientations change through the introduction of alternative conceptualizations is identified by Burke as “perspective by incongruity.”

In order to further explicate the function of perspective by incongruity, it is first important to take a step back and reconsider the notion of piety as the “system builder” of orientations (p. 74 -76). Orientations are constructed on the basis of what is pious, or somehow connected and normalized. The question is then addressed by Burke what is to be made of the presentation of what is impious or somehow not belonging within the cultural or individual notions of what is pious. By constructing notions of what is pious, individuals link concepts together as somehow “congruous,” or compatible. For example, Burke utilizes the concept of indigenous human populations connecting the notion of the healing of disease with the sacrifice of animals (Burke, 1954 p.16-17). In this example the removal of disease is congruous or compatible with the sacrificing of a tribal animal. To an outsider, this practice exudes madness and an error in the attribution of causality, because their notion of what is pious is quite different than that of the tribal population. Perspective by incongruity is the process of “verbal atom cracking” which rhetorically breaks apart those connections that are deemed culturally pious (Burke, 1937 p. 308). Perspective by incongruity is marked by the presentation of alternative conceptions through the illustration of the impiety of traditionally held pious connections. In other words, through this process, some kind of artistic production illustrates the incongruity within traditional distinctions of what has traditionally been deemed congruous or pious. However, by illustrating this incongruity this oppositional text also begins the forging of new conceptions of what is pious, thus creating new alignments of

orientation. Perspective by incongruity is therefore the means by which orientations may change and adapt over time.

Perspective by incongruity is a process and not a specific entity or text. At the heart of the notion of perspective by incongruity for Burke is the function of artistic texts. Through artistic production (whether through literature, fiction, rhetoric, or otherwise), the source of these oppositional forces that disrupt standing orientations is forged. Therefore a text, in and of itself, is not a perspective by incongruity, but may be highlighted as the beginning of the process of perspective by incongruity. The text is itself a departure from traditional notions of form and piety, which provides a challenge to the normalized foundations of orientation.

As method for utilizing the dramatistic contributions of Burke, my analysis involves a process of identification, which I will now describe. Utilizing the work of other videogame theorists, I will briefly highlight the “form” of sexism within the videogame industry. This involves a discussion of the “pious” linkages between representations of femininity and various elements of videogame texts which will represent repetitive and conventional forms of sexism. My task is then to textually analyze the game *Beyond Good and Evil* utilizing the methodology of McAllister (2004) and Consalvo (2003) finding the pious linkages portrayed within the game through its visual and narrative elements. I will then illustrate how the pious linkages within the *Beyond Good and Evil* text serve to disrupt the form of sexism of the industry through the process of perspective by incongruity. My analysis will then allow me to draw conclusions about the ways in which *Beyond Good and Evil* operates rhetorically as an oppositional force to the constructions of gender presented by the industry.

When Gee (2005) pointed toward an analysis of videogames as equipment for living, I’m unsure that he was indicating an analysis with such rich Burkean complexity. However, the

understanding of literature as having cultural salience beyond itself is derived from a rich tradition of Burkean theoretical underpinnings. These underpinnings are essential for the analysis of this project.

Other method choices

Although the analysis in this project pertains primarily to the textual implications of a particular videogame and not the unique apparatus with which the game is played, it is important to mention my selection of gaming apparatus (platform). Gamers that read this project will undoubtedly wonder which platform I have selected for analysis, and non-gamers might have no conception of what it means to select one gaming platform over another. I will now seek to clarify my choices in this regard utilizing the work of other videogame scholars.

Many scholars, myself included, refer generally to videogames (or computer games) in reference to a wide universe of interactive texts. But what does this term include? Videogames are themselves software programs designed and created to run on a specific platform, whether that platform be a cell phone, or a personal computer. The experience of that software might differ significantly depending on which platform it is experienced with. One platform might have better graphical capability, able to produce near photorealistic imagery, while another platform, although capable of playing the same game in all aspects, might not be able to do so with anywhere near the same graphical complexity. Think of watching a film stored on a VHS tape rather than a DVD disc. The same film is being watched, but the quality of the video produced is substantially better from the DVD. Videogame platforms differ in many additional ways than graphical capability including viewing apparatus (screen, television, projector etc.,) processing power (determines the speed

with which a platform runs a game,) and controller apparatus (the means by which the human player interacts with the game, normally through a plastic device with buttons representing different functions). Any of these elements of a gaming platform may have a substantial effect on the experience of the game itself.

The difference between console platforms and the PC (personal computer) platform is generally minute. The PC platform involves the use of a normal office or home PC which are designed to be used in a wide array of functions including office applications, email, internet browsing, text messaging, music editing and playing, CD and DVD creation, and gaming. A PC is not designed for the sole purpose of playing videogames but instead has the ability to play videogames as one of many functions. Normally PCs utilize a keyboard and mouse as user input devices and a monitor (screen) as an output device.

On the other hand, console platforms are generally created for one purpose and one purpose only; gaming. These machines can be thought of as miniature PCs that are designed only to play videogames in a specialized way. Consoles generally use television sets as their output devices and “controllers” as their input devices. Controllers are simply small devices designed to fit in the hands of the human player and transmit the input of the human player to the gaming machine. These controllers are generally plastic handheld devices with buttons made up of different colors and shapes that coincide with different functions within the game. Generally game consoles cost substantially less than PCs. Many industry observers have been pointing toward the general decline in PC gaming and the migration to console gaming which has become more prominent in the last ten years. As of 2006, game consoles actually make up a great majority of videogames played in the world (ESA, 2006).

Generally, a videogame's release will involve the distribution of game software (normally stored on discs similar to DVD's) that will work with one particular game platform. The same game may be produced for many different platforms although generally games are packaged to work with one game platform (the same game may be bought for multiple platforms, but requires the purchaser to buy multiple copies of the game, one for each individual platform). The game that I have chosen for my analysis is no different. When *Beyond Good and Evil* was released in 2003, it was produced for PC, and console platforms (Xbox, Gamecube, and Playstation 2). As a result, *Beyond Good and Evil* was released to as wide an audience as could be achieved at the time of its release. The owner of any contemporary videogame platform could have bought and played *Beyond Good and Evil* after its release in 2003.

My choices for my analysis of *Beyond Good and Evil* is the Microsoft Xbox console. There are three primary reasons for this selection of videogame platform for my analysis:

- *Beyond Good and Evil* as a videogame text is virtually the same regardless of the reader's choice of platform. It is my assumption therefore that utilizing the Xbox as a platform for analysis is representative of the analysis that could be accomplished utilizing any other existing platform.
- The focus for this research is again, the textual elements of the game, which I understand to be virtually the same, and not the apparatus restrictions of a particular platform.
- The Xbox is currently the platform most readily available for my use in my analysis.

Through this brief explanation of the terminology of videogames and the choices which I have made for my analysis, I hope that the reader will fully understand the means with which I will execute my analysis of the videogame text *beyond Good and Evil*.

Method Conclusion

Through the adoption of a multi-perspectival approach to the study of my videogame text of choice, I believe this methodology will yield an interesting analysis with implications for the industry and within the videogame “complex” as it were (McAllister, 2004 p. 1). The fusion of Burkean methodology with the work of others in videogame and gender studies will constitute a new and unique combination, but one that I hope will prove fruitful in my investigation.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS

This chapter contains my analysis of the videogame *Beyond Good and Evil* as a rhetorical force of perspective by incongruity. The first section includes a brief historical account of the game and an introductory descriptive analysis of the game in order to inform the reader of the context surrounding the game text. The second section deals exclusively with illustrating the specific ways in which the game serves to disrupt the sexist forms of the industry which are presented through the work of other videogame scholars.

History and Descriptive Analysis

In this section, I will briefly undertake a descriptive analysis of the game in order to familiarize the reader with the characters, narrative, and history of the videogame. The rhetorical analysis of many of these elements is approached in the following section.

History

Beyond Good and Evil was designed primarily by the famous French game designer Michel Ancel. Ancel is known both for his wildly different game concepts and for the inclusion of political activism in his games. This particular game was produced “in-house,” meaning that the game’s distributor, Ubisoft, one of the major videogame producers in the world, did not outsource the creation of the game to another company, instead choosing to

utilize their own studio resources to create the game. Videogame companies are normally hesitant to take on these kinds of projects due to the higher risk associated with the games failure. This means that *Beyond Good and Evil* was a serious project undertaken by a major developer with a big name producer. By the end of 2003, all of the pieces were in place for a successful release of the game.

Nonetheless, there were major problems with the release of *Beyond Good and Evil*. The game was released at the same time as several other industry blockbusters, which significantly hampered its sales. The failure of the game to compete with these larger titles relegated it to a “bottom shelf” item, which didn’t receive the same kind of exposure as other videogame projects of the time. Despite extremely positive reviews and much critical acclaim, the game sold abysmally, failing to sell well on every system for which it was released. *Beyond Good and evil* is what those in the industry refer to as an original intellectual property, or original IP. Intellectual property (IP) refers to the concept of an artistic production, like a patent for artistic production. These are created so that others may not produce property (books, films, commercials etc.) featuring the characters, histories, and worlds of an existing IP without first licensing that IP from the creator. This means that instead of relying on a pre-existing set of characters, narrative histories, and in-game worlds, *Beyond Good and Evil* was produced originally by the designer of the game Michel Ancel. Within the videogame industry, there are seldom second chances for success with original IPs of a videogame, meaning that due to the poor sales of the game, *Beyond Good and Evil* would be the first and last game produced in the series even though Ancel originally conceived the narrative of *Beyond Good and Evil* as a three game trilogy (McCarthy, 2004).

Since its release and market failure, *Beyond Good and Evil* has become somewhat of a cult hit among many gaming communities. Various “girl gamer” websites have sung the praises of the game’s innovative representation of a female protagonist (LadyGamers, 2006). Surveying the community of videogame critics on the Internet also reveals a deep appreciation for the game within the communities of videogame critics who by and large have praised the game since its release. Eventually the game become one of the first available on the new gaming rental service known as Gametap in which customers pay a monthly subscription to have games mailed to their homes until they are returned for other games (similar to the Netflix service for DVD films). *Beyond Good and Evil* enjoyed a resurgence on this service and even became a staple of the advertising for the service on television and on the internet. At the time of this writing Jade is the most prominent character utilized in Gametap advertisements, passing extremely popular characters such as *Tomb Raider’s* Lara Croft, and *Tom Clancey’s Splinter Cell’s* Sam Fisher, even though both of these game series have enjoyed incredible market success.

A somewhat smaller online community still actively discusses the game and its surrounding discourses three years after the game’s original release, clamoring for the production for a sequel. A new generation of videogame hardware has become available since the launch of *Beyond Good and Evil* which somewhat dates the game and its accessibility for contemporary gamers. Michel Ancel has gone on to create other intellectual properties with Ubisoft, but none involving *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Characters

Jade: The protagonist in the story of *Beyond Good and Evil* is Jade, a human woman with a hazy past. Jade was orphaned as a child and never knew her parents or where she was originally from. She lives in a large rural house shared by a community of creatures both human and humanoid. Jade is a journalist by trade and is never far from her camera which is the sole possession she retains from her parents. She frequently utilizes the camera to take pictures of both the beauty of her home planet and the many newsworthy events that take place around her. The game never specifies an age for Jade who seems to defy categorical classification along those and many other lines of inquiry (although the game website refers to her as 20 years old). Recent events on her home world have led her to become the lead reporter for a resistance group known as IRIS, which opposes the dominating rule of the Domz, which are an overly controlling and dominating force throughout the planet on which Jade lives.

Pey’J: Living in the large house with Jade is Pey’J, an older and ornery humanoid resembling a portly pig. Pey’J is renowned as a handyman, inventor, and fighter, which is exemplified in his brash and grizzled demeanor. Pey’J built the lighthouse within which Jade, he, and many other creatures live on an island off the coast of the mainland. Pey’J is Jade’s best friend and has become quite protective of her since they have met.

Double-H: Little is known about Double-H besides his code name. He is a middle aged veteran soldier for the Domz forces that discovers immoral and deceptive practices of the Domz government. This realization leads him to defect to the IRIS network of resistance fighters. He is captured and tortured by the Domz until Jade saves his life, for which he is eternally grateful, pledging his undying loyalty to her and the cause of IRIS. Double-H

normally fights first, and thinks second, which befits his large human frame, and even larger armor that covers nearly all of his body and is never removed throughout the entire game.

Narrative Story

The world in which all of these characters live is known as the planet Hyllis. Hyllis is both the small planet, and the name of the planet's largest city which dwells at the center of all Hyllian activities. As mentioned earlier, the world of Hyllis is governed and policed by the dominating Domz government. The world is defended by the Alpha Sections which are mechanized and human defense forces known for their decisive action against the enemies of the state and for their harsh treatment of the citizens of Hyllis. Most citizens abide by the Domz out of fear of retaliation should they speak out against it. But not all citizens of Hyllis agree with the Domz. The IRIS network is a resistance group which seeks small, but critical, rebellions against the Domz and their oppressive regime. The IRIS network produces a weekly electronic newspaper which keeps all those interested in resistance informed about the progress of the resistance movement. The Domz government has recently informed its citizens of a new and critical alien threat to Hyllis with which it must go to war. The Domz requires the help of its citizens, willing or not, to fight this costly war. This is the primary issue with which the IRIS network engages with the Domz in discursive warfare through its newspaper, simply named the IRIS.

Gameplay

The primary controlled character throughout the game is Jade. She is controlled from a third person perspective (meaning that there is an invisible "camera" behind her, through

which the player controls her movements on screen). The game is intensely cooperative in that two characters are partially controlled simultaneously throughout the game which actually merges many styles of play through its utilization of control of Jade and myriad vehicles at different points in the game. *Beyond Good and Evil* utilizes a simple combat system and is heavily reliant upon puzzle solving and cooperation for advancement toward game goals.

Different parts of the game require different modes of play. Much of the game is experienced with the control and perspective of Jade in her pursuit to both document the immoral activities of the Domz and to defeat the enemies that get in her way. Other portions of the game allow for the exploration of the planet aboard Jade's hovercraft with a great degree of freedom. Still other portions of the game rely on quick reflexes in controlling Jade's hovercraft through winding passages in pursuit of bandits.

Throughout the experience of the game the player is brought all over the planet Hyllis, its myriad cultural and geographical settings, and eventually into outer space surrounding the world of Hyllis.

The brief description of the game and its characters contained here should allow the reader to understand the character references in the subsequent analysis section. This descriptive analysis is intended as only a preliminary examination of the game, and certainly does not describe the many characters, subplots, and nuanced gameplay elements contained within the game text. All of the described elements are pertinent to the following analysis section.

The Occupational Psychosis of the Videogame Industry

What I propose for this project is that the problematic representations of gender within contemporary videogames are more than random occurrences, but are instead calculated choices made by videogame designers with rhetorical implications. The following analysis section utilizes the work of videogame scholars that have taken note of the representations of gender along with my own observations to make specific points about the ways in which the Game *Beyond Good and Evil* functions as a discursive force against e4h conventions of gender of the industry as a whole. This mode of research involves assumptions drawn from the work of Burke.

As I have stated, the representations of gender reflect the rhetorical choices by designers through their inclusion in contemporary videogames. The ubiquity of problematic representations of gender in games noted by researchers over the past decade indicates a larger structure of inclusion for these representations. Upon closer analysis, these representations are repeated, both in videogames of the same franchise (i.e. the same characters and narrative worlds) and across videogaming divides such as genre. The repetition and conventionalization of these representations represents larger constructions of form within the industry. Kennedy (2002) illustrates the ways in which the “themes and tropes” of sexist representation in other popular culture media are also constituted in videogames as formal attributes. These “themes and tropes” are what Burke would refer to as forms, as they play toward the audience’s conceptions of what is “normal” for such texts. The formal attributes involving the problematic representations ubiquitous to the texts of the videogames industry is what I refer to as the sexist forms of the industry. I will identify a number of these sexist forms of the industry in the following analysis section.

What also becomes evident is that these forms are utilized in nearly every popular game available for console platforms. The sexist forms of the industry are in fact industry-wide phenomena, illustrated by contemporary designers utilizing the themes and tropes of sexist representation in their videogame texts. It is evident that the utilization of these forms are relied upon not only to sell games, but to entice the formal expectations of videogame players. Therefore the utilization of the sexist forms of the industry also point to a particular occupational psychosis of the industry as a whole in that these representations of gender are seemingly the solitary means of representation of which designers within the industry make use. Substantial emphasis has been placed lately on the lack of creativity within the videogame industry due to this kind of occupational psychosis (Gaudiosi, 2006; Wong and Haimoimoi, 2006). This lack of creativity is partially due to the occupational psychoses of the videogame industry, one of which being that revolving around the gender constructions within videogames. The rigidified status of gender inclusion and representation within contemporary videogame texts reifies this occupational psychosis as these games continue to rise in popularity.

Therefore, in the following analysis section, I will illustrate how *Beyond Good and Evil* as a game text serves as a disruptive force against the conventions of the industry, and in acting as such, serves to stand in opposition to the gendered occupational psychosis of the videogame industry.

Analysis

Before delving into the heart of my analysis I should first take a moment to clarify the examination of videogames and the game *Beyond Good and Evil* which follows. I spend significant time in my analysis section dissecting traditionally masculine stereotypes that

remain commonplace within contemporary videogames. Alternatively, I also illustrate ways in which the game *Beyond Good and Evil* does not conform to these stereotypes, and in some cases, turns the stereotypical linkages upside down by providing a more feminized approach. I must be clear at this point that I am not implying that the feminized alternative is in any way superior to the male stereotypes as this would simply constitute the replacement of problematic constructions with others that are just as problematic, even if the linkages are reversed. Instead, my aim in this analysis is to illustrate how offering alternative perspectives in terms of gender construction, provides for a freedom of choice in how the player constitutes gender from the content provided. Henry Jenkins (1999) has referred to a more gender neutral play-space which caters toward both genders equally due to its allowance for a freedom of choice for players. Jenkins recognizes the need to “open up more space” for female gamers by offering a greater degree of freedom and choice in terms of the gender construction of game worlds (p. 291). My intention here is to illustrate that games like *Beyond Good and Evil* better allow for the freedom of choice by users, by breaking apart problematic and necessary linkages with gender and reconstructing a world in which the user is free to make many connections with gender. At the core of my analysis is the belief that games like *Beyond Good and Evil* have begun to constitute the ideal play-space envisioned many years ago by Jenkins.

My analysis of the game *Beyond Good and Evil* consists of two major pieces. The first is dedicated to the primary instantiation of the game’s discursive force, which is exhibited through the game’s representation of the main character Jade. The second portion of my analysis will look into more general loci of gender construction that are represented through the game as a whole so as to illustrate a more complete picture of the game’s discursive

work. With this section, I am attempting to highlight the gender constructions of interest within the game text that indicate its oppositional and disruptive discursive force which situates it existing at the beginning of a perspective by incongruity against the common forms of sexism utilized by the industry of videogames.

Although there are many ways in which the game text *Beyond Good and Evil* signifies a perspective by incongruity, none are as prominent as the portrayal of the main character Jade who is the primary character controlled by the player throughout the game. In this first analysis section, I will highlight the ways in which Jade herself personifies the character of perspective by incongruity in the ways in which she stands out and against the formal constraints of the videogame complex.

As Dietz (1998) wrote in her quantitative study of contemporary videogames, “The most common portrayal of women was actually the complete absence of women at all” (p. 7). Therefore, the first way in which Jade as a character in *Beyond Good and Evil* contributes to the oppositional nature of the text is the simple fact that she is a female protagonist. According to a 2002 quantitative study undertaken by the organization Children Now of videogame representations, a mere 17% of console platform videogames feature a female protagonist (Leonard 2006). Female protagonists were the fewest represented behind male protagonists, who represented 64%, and non-human protagonists without sex identifiers representing 19%. What is remarkable in this study is that women in the heroic role of the protagonist are neglected, so much so that non-human characters receive greater inclusion than females. *Beyond Good and Evil* was released in 2003, right around the same time as these statistics were collected meaning that the main character of Jade was among the small minority of women videogame protagonists at the time of the game’s release.

The Children Now study also illustrates the form of sexism of the industry in that out of the small percentage of female characters that are “playable” or controlled by the player, 50% of these characters are utilized as props or “eye candy” (Leonard, 2006). Of all women characters in platform games (playable or not) 20% of female characters expose their breasts and over 10% expose their rear ends. Kennedy (2002) reiterates the overwhelming ratio of male to female protagonists within the videogame complex. My experience has illustrated that many of the women that are incorporated as protagonists or playable characters are included in order to highlight their gender roles and their connection to sexual activity. They are not designed with narrative character development as many game characters are, but instead are included only on the basis of their sex or gender. Taking into consideration the tropes of the industry in terms of its representations of women, Jade was unique at that moment in history as she was a female protagonist that was not included as a function of her sex or for her sexual exposure as eye candy. In this way, the representations of Jade are off the beaten path in terms of the contemporary videogames of the time in which the game was released.

To focus on Jade for a bit, I will highlight the ways in which Jade in her appearance and behavior generally serves to challenge traditional notions of the inclusion of women characters in videogames.

The first aspect of Jade to analyze is her appearance, which I would consider unique among her female protagonist counterparts. Jade is not particularly tall, but is at least as tall as most Hyllian residents met along her journey. Jade has short black hair, another rarity among her contemporaries which seem almost always to have long and extravagant hair despite the arduous activity they engage in during gameplay. Long hair is certainly more of a

traditionally feminized look for women protagonists, especially those that appear partially nude. What skin that can be seen of Jade is noticeably darkened. Jade's dark complexion is a substantial rarity in a medium that features a female character with bleached skin seemingly around every corner. According to the Children Now study, more than 80% of women characters in console videogames are white with black characters making up a mere 10% and all other racial groups combined representing a meager single digit percentage. My own experience with games has also pointed to the fact that many, if not most, of the white female characters included in games are not only white, but pale white, even unrealistically pale. However, Jade is not easily classified as either white or black as her skin is significantly darker than most female characters, but not clearly black either. This is echoed by a lead designer on the game which stated in an interview that Jade was created in explicit defiance of racial categorization (LadyGamers, 2004). In any case, Jade's skin is unique among the female protagonists of the videogames of the time.

Jade is relatively proportional in figure. In other words, she is not given over-sized breasts or a miniature waste for her frame as is overwhelmingly typical among nearly every female character in contemporary videogames. Her shape does not bring unnecessary attention to any single feature of her body. A substantial part of the form of sexism within the videogame industry is the tendency to "over-sex" women characters both in terms of their visual appearance and through their actions within the worlds of videogames. Jade is clearly not oversexed in terms of her visual representation as her breasts have a more normal shape, she shows no cleavage, and her body actually maintains a semblance of proportionality. As simple as these elements of Jade's appearance might seem, they truly are unique within the videogame complex in which nearly every female character has relatively no clothes,

disproportionately large breasts, unrealistically small waists and physics-defying body characteristics. Many games now feature completely separate software engines (known as breast physics) that are solely responsible for the control over how the breasts of women videogame characters' bounce during gameplay. Jade does not have exaggeratedly large breasts, nor is there an engine in the game that exerts control over the way in which her breasts react to game stimuli. In many ways, the figure of Jade is quite unique among female videogame characters which further illustrates the contribution of Jade toward disrupting the common notions of the role of women in videogames.

Jade is dressed rather conservatively compared to other female protagonists, with full, even baggy pants and a jacket, both of which remain on her for the entire duration of the game. The only remotely revealing part of Jade's outfit is her shirt which although rather tight around her frame reveals no cleavage. This outfit also stands in direct contrast to the clothing of common female videogame characters which seem to wear less as the photorealistic graphic capabilities of videogame platforms allow the images they produce to appear more real. The diminutive wardrobe of female videogame characters is not limited to games such as *Dead or Alive Extreme Beach Volleyball* which loosely incorporates a story around a tongue in cheek, near pornographic game about oversexed women trapped on an island. In more games than ever, women are now presented with very little clothing so as to draw attention to their figures which are often constructed through patriarchal ideals of femininity. In games in which characters wear substantial armor around their bodies such as *Guild Wars* or *Elder Scrolls: Oblivion*, designers give women armor that more closely resembles a bikini than a suit of armor in order to draw the same attention toward the figure

of the woman character. This is yet another trope which represents the form of sexism of the industry that Jade, unlike most of her contemporary counterparts, does not fit into.

In addition to Jade's visual appearance, her character also illustrates throughout the game other ways that she defies the conventions of the industry. Jade is very intelligent, which becomes evident as the game progresses. The role of combative moments in the game are few, with the time in between being dominated by Jade displaying her ability to solve puzzles in order to solve her problems. She is not a violent character, only relying on violence as a last resort when she cannot find ways around them. Jade is interestingly enough quite competent in combat however, illustrating her complexity as a character. She is both a cunning and intelligent woman, and a formidable foe in combat at the same time. Too often in the industry women are presented as belonging to the traditional track of male characters, by finding and utilizing bigger weaponry to do more damage (along the lines of the famous Lara Croft). In this way, many women in games have hyper-feminized bodies and character elements, but come to embody the idealized male qualities of violence, destruction, and revenge. The other conventional track for women in contemporary videogames involves the relegation to the role of the sensitive observer, overly frightened by everything around her with no capability of her own to manage any situation (more along the lines of Princess Peach from the *Super Mario* games). Jade is neither of these things. She is not scared to fight with a demonstrated confidence in her abilities, but she is first and foremost an intelligent thinker, finding creative ways to solve her problems. She defends those that need her, but has need for the help of others, never taking all of the weight of the Hylian problems alone on her shoulders. In this way, Jade exhibits a complexity that would shock many contemporary

gamers that possess orientations reflective of the conventional forms of the industry which would hardly ever present a feminine character with any of these qualities.

In the following section, I will illustrate the many ways that Jade as a main character of the game *Beyond Good and Evil* serves to challenge the notion of piety present in the conventional forms of sexism that are currently at work in the videogame industry by engaging the prevailing notions of piety that I have observed.

Women and Sex

The first pious connections engaged repetitively and conventionally by the industry in regard to the representations of women in videogames is that between women and sex. The connection between women and sex is apparent when viewing common representations of women in contemporary videogames, with women being connected to sex almost as a dictate of their function. It would seem from many videogames that the role of women in these games is relegated to sexual encounters as the definition of their sole purpose. In videogames with overly macho male characters as protagonists, women are often only called upon in situations defined by sexual activity. In games featuring female protagonists, the over-sexing of the appearance of these characters comes to define them primarily as sexual entities. Women are also seemingly somehow “validated” through their fulfillment of sexual action with male characters. In the famous fighting series of videogames *Tekken*, after the game is completed with a female character, the cinematic ending often portrays these women in sexual situations either with male characters or being observed by male characters as a finalization of the game narrative.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Jade requires no validation by male counterparts in order to achieve or somehow finalize the narrative. Jade also is never associated with sexual acts or innuendo, which is again quite rare in contemporary videogames. Jade instead becomes the pivotal fulcrum by which other characters come to realize their purpose in the game. She is continually called upon to come to the aid of male and female counterparts in the game, which comes to illustrate the very capable nature of her character. There is never a definition of the characters of the game in accordance with a love story or any kind of sexual innuendo. Instead Jade remains the focus of the game in which she continually redefines herself along many axes, but never according to her connection with sexual themes. In this way Jade serves to disrupt the connection between sex and women in games. The conventional sexism of the industry creates the expectation of a sexual connection between Jade and other male characters, which never happens. Instead, Jade affirms through her actions that she is not defined by sex, but will work to define herself in other, more interesting and complex ways. In this way, the character of Jade offers a perspective by incongruity to the conventional connection between the women of videogame texts and sex.

Women as Sex Objects

The utilization of women as sex objects is probably the most prominent of all of the conventional forms of sexism currently created and maintained by the industry. Visually, women in videogames tend to represent women as objects of adolescent male fantasies rather than as living, breathing, human beings. The pious usage of women in games relegates them to little more than what Leonard (2006) refers to as “eye candy” (p. 84). The creator of the videogame *Tomb Raider*, Toby Gard, originally had designed the game with a male protagonist in mind, which was abruptly changed against his wishes to the now infamous

Lara Croft, the busty and sexually suggestive woman as the protagonist. Gard's objection was not on the basis that Lara was a woman, but that she was being utilized as a sex object, and nothing more, which upset the designer enough that he left the project and the company shortly after *Tomb Raider's* release. *Tomb Raider* became an industry phenomenon, selling millions of games over countless sequels with Lara Croft becoming more photorealistic with the improvements in graphic hardware and more unrealistic in terms of her figure as each sequel has been released.

Lara embodies a masculine ideal of feminine sexuality in that she wears very little clothing on every occasion; she has an almost laughably unrealistic figure with enormously large breasts and an extremely small waistline. According to Kennedy (2002), "Each of her provocative curves was as much a part of the game as the tombs she raided." She is also imbued with the traditionally masculine qualities of wanton violence and extravagant weaponry. Lara is much more representative of the female protagonists utilized in a great majority of videogames produced by the contemporary videogame industry. Jade from *Beyond Good and Evil* on the other hand, is anything but a sex object, not because she isn't beautiful in her own right, but because the refinement of her character becomes the focus of the narrative as the game unfolds. Jade has character depth beyond the simple traits that are thrown on to characters like Lara Croft almost as a matter of requirement (Kennedy, 2002). Jade is complex, dynamic, and multidimensional. She never completely embodies a particular traditional gender dynamic, which makes her a challenging figure to the orientations of conventional gamers. Jade is powerful, but not through her weaponry or bravado which constitutes power for most videogame characters generally. Jade is intelligent, but not in a limited way, pertaining only to traditionally feminine activities as is so often

utilized in videogames. Jade is beautiful, but her beauty is not the focus of the game. Her figure is not abnormal, or over-sexed.

Laura Mulvey's (1975) landmark essay on the function of women in film illustrates the conventions of the videogame in regard to the inclusion of women. Mulvey reads the inclusion of the over-sexualized bodies of women in film as the objectification of women toward the male gaze of the camera. As Kennedy (2002) illustrates, it is easy to read most, if not all female videogame protagonists (including Lara Croft) in a similar way due to their appearance in accordance with idealized masculine conceptions of femininity. By rejecting the convention of this kind of imagery for the protagonist, the designers of Jade imbued her with oppositional power against these conventions. Jade therefore does work similar to Lara Croft and others in that she steps into traditionally masculine spaces and holds her own quite well. But she also embodies the next step beyond that which characters such as Lara Croft do, which is to hold her own in this masculine space without objectifying her body in doing so. The industry has long hesitated to implant strong female protagonists without somehow objectifying their bodies (Kennedy, 2002). Jade forces players out of their comfort zones in this regard, by reconstituting their notions of femininity, masculinity, and sexual objectification.

Jade breaks out of the mold of women included in videogames as sex objects and posits herself as a dynamic and complex character with capabilities that do not clearly classify her under any particular gender role category. Through Jade's inclusion in *Beyond Good and Evil*, she therefore serves to disrupt the conventional pious connections of the industry while alternatively offering new pious linkages between a women character that has unique nuances not normally (if ever) attributed to women characters in videogames. It is in this way

that the character of Jade offers a perspective by incongruity toward the conventional pious connection between women in videogames and sex objects.

Women and Weakness

A large portion of the masculine conventions of the videogame industry is constituted by the connection between women and weakness in videogames. With the exception of a new wave of female protagonists that exhibit the ability to maintain great strength over foes, the industry has tended to highlight the more traditionally feminine qualities of nurturing and caring for others as the archetypes of female videogame characters (Douglas, 2006). The primary example of this phenomenon is from the series of *Super Mario* games produced now for more than two decades. These games feature Mario, a stereotypically Italian plumber who endeavors to conquer his enemies who repetitively kidnap Princess Peach. Peach is a small, overwhelmingly pale, and pink clothed individual who seems to have very limited abilities other than that of being kidnapped. Over the course of twenty years the *Mario* franchise has seen the creation of many characters with a nucleus of several main characters at the heart of the *Mario* universe. Out of all of these characters, it is only Peach that has never had a game of her own with her serving as the main protagonist thus emphasizing her weakness. In every game she is in, Peach is portrayed as delicate, precocious, and with an annoyingly high-pitched voice. Peach faints at the first hint of violence and giggles childishly at the advances of Mario. With the exception of the *Smash Brothers* series of games, Peach never engages in any activity involving her own defense. Peach is stereotypically weak as a character and as the lone woman character among the main recurring characters in the *Mario* franchise. She is

also quite representative of a great majority of female characters in games who exhibit the videogame convention of the weak feminine stereotype.

Jade again embodies quite an oppositional force towards the weakness convention of the videogame industry. The beginning sequence of the game is particularly indicative of Jade's interruption of the convention of weakness prescribed for women in videogames. The sequence begins with Jade alone meditating in front of a beautiful landscape of the ocean by her house. As powerful invading forces trap her friends, Jade springs to action rescuing them all and ensuring their safety. In the player's first exposure to Jade, she immediately moves from a peaceful and serene setting to demonstrating her powerful ability to protect herself and her friends. In both contexts, Jade demonstrates her competence and ability to adapt as the situation requires. Jade is not one-dimensional like the character of Peach which exhibits all manner of feminine stereotypes, but instead seems to defy these stereotypes as she demonstrates her ability to wield her power. Jade demonstrates that she is not weak, and in doing so illustrates how a female character is not precluded from being powerful thereby both interrupting the convention of women as weak, but construction new conceptions of women as powerful characters. By disrupting the stereotypical convention of the videogame industry of women as weak characters, Jade also serves as the disruptive force marked by perspective by incongruity.

Women as "Damsel in Distress"

In many cases, working hand in hand with the "women as weak" convention of the industry is the tendency to reaffirm the linkage between women characters and their dependency upon men, mostly in a "damsel in distress" scenario (Dietz, 1998 p.7). Again

citing the *Mario* series as an example, Peach is dependant on Mario as her savior after she is kidnapped. This is quite typical of the representations of women in videogames who are conventionally depicted in videogame worlds as being dependant on male characters for their safety and well-being. However, the reliance of the female characters on the male characters does not include caring or nurturing qualities, which are perceived as traditionally feminine. The dependence upon male characters by female characters almost always involves the physical strength or heroic prowess of the male figure, which are traditionally masculine qualities. There are several implications of this repetitive and conventional videogame form. According to this convention, the masculine trumps the feminine, the heroes of these games embody traditionally masculine qualities, and that the traditionally feminine characters rely on these heroes for legitimacy and narrative survival.

Continuing with the critical lens of Mulvey's male gaze phenomenon, the "damsel in distress" scenario is one in which the artistic representation of the world resembles idealized fantasies of male onlookers. The male fantasy of the strong masculine male figure rushing in at the last minute to save the weak feminine female figure is found historically in fairy tales, novels, plays, films, music, art, and television. Videogames are no different in that most of the games with male protagonists involve a damsel in distress scenario, which provides the motivation behind the entire game. As Dietz (1998) points out, the history of videogames has seen its own version of the damsel in distress form utilized in videogames involving an idealized large-breasted white woman character, being physically hurt or kidnapped, providing the motivation of revenge for the masculine hero character. A contemporary example comes from the game *Resident Evil 4* in which the President of the United State's daughter is abducted by an anti-American cult religious group. The teenage daughter Ashley

is dressed provocatively with a short skirt and a neckline that displays her sizable cleavage. It becomes incumbent upon Leon, the story's hero, to dramatically rescue Ashley before the cult group sacrifices her. The character of Ashley is overwhelmingly typical of female characters utilized in videogames as the damsels in distress.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, not only is Jade far from a damsel in distress, but her character turns this convention on its head. On numerous occasions throughout the game, Jade is called upon by the male characters to save them from dire situations. Pey'J is saved by Jade numerous times as he comes to depend on her for his safety. Even the masculine Double-H is saved from a torture chamber by Jade who bravely finds her way through the dangerous Domz factory to rescue him. Again, throughout the game Jade's character not only disrupts the conventional form of the videogame industry, but also provides the foundation of new possibilities of pious alignment by saving her masculine counterparts as they come to rely on her for help. The narrative of other conventional games would fall apart with such a conception as they rely on the gender roles of the characters to remain (in tact) for their narrative acceptance, or in other words, their fulfillment of form. Peach has never saved Mario in 20 years of games. Ashley never saves Leon, she just finds her way back to him. The industry and these games rely upon the convention of the damsel in distress as a formal contribution to videogames. Jade as a character serves to deconstruct this convention through her behavior which stands as an oppositional force against the damsel in distress scenario.

Analysis Conclusion

There are many ways in which the protagonist character of Jade occupies an oppositional force against many sexist conventions of the videogame industry. In each of these instances,

Jade's oppositional force achieves disruption of the pious connections created and maintained by the industry. In doing so, Jade's presence in the game serves to challenge the notions of piety for the player, thus interfering with the game's fulfillment of form. However, as has been evinced in the previous section, Jade's discursive "work" is not limited to disruption, as she also provides the foundation of new pious connections regarding her femininity and the nature of female characters in videogames. It is through Jade's disruption and reconstitution of pious and formal conventions of the industry that she begins the rhetorical work of perspective by incongruity. Jade challenges the orientations of the players that engage with *Beyond Good and Evil* that have become so accustomed to the form of sexism in the industry. Jade in and of herself certainly defies convention in regard to the gender roles of female characters in videogames, most especially female protagonists. However, there is more rhetorical work of the game *Beyond Good and Evil* that serves similar purposes for other forms of sexism in the industry. The next section of my analysis will investigate other points of opposition that further illustrate the perspective by incongruity offered by the videogame *Beyond Good Evil*.

Cooperation

The emphasis in almost every videogame in which there is a protagonist that is controlled through a great majority of the playing time of the game lies upon individual accomplishment in overcoming adversity through the game's narrative in order to achieve goals within the game world. The traditionally masculine hero is often represented as the unfulfilled loner, powerful, macho, and brave to a fault. These heroes tend to individually overcome the adversity in the game world in order to achieve the goals set forth by the game's narrative.

For example, the recent release *Scarface: The World is Yours*, modeled after the movie with the same title, gives the player bonuses such as invincibility as that character gains more “balls” for performing brave or unimaginable feats. The more “balls” the player accumulates, the greater the bonuses which the player receives, which serve to enhance the destructive power of their character. The concept here is a prominent one within the industry in which brave individual achievement, constituted by traditionally masculine qualities, are the primary means of achievement in videogame worlds.

Along these lines *Beyond Good and Evil* is unique in that the game emphasizes cooperation throughout. Jade is limited in her abilities, a fact which the player is undeniably aware of during gameplay. Accordingly, Jade looks to her companions for cooperation in order to collectively achieve the goals of the game. In fact, one cannot advance through the puzzles and challenges of the game without utilizing the cooperation of multiple characters, all controlled simultaneously by the player. There are many instances in the game in which Jade and Pey’J team up to explore an area or to document an event. In all of these instances throughout the game it becomes quite common that barriers will arise that limit one or the other party member’s ability to progress without the cooperation of the other. Whether it is Jade’s ability to climb over high objects to gain access to a switch allowing Pey’J to enter a room, or Pey’J’s ability to cut through fence wiring, allowing Jade entry into new areas, the two work as a team and cannot advance through the game without this cooperative effort.

I raise this point because cooperation is a traditionally feminine quality which is largely ignored or removed from most action or adventure videogames. As many scholars have documented, the relatively new genre of the MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role playing game) allows individuals from all over the world to cooperate in real time to achieve

objectives together. This genre, which was by and large only a niche market in 2003 when *Beyond Good and Evil* was released, is the logical extension of the cooperation emphasized by games like *Beyond Good and Evil* which dispense with the necessity for the exaggeratedly brave and masculine attributes of the all-conquering individual in order to embrace a new dynamic, characterized by cooperation. The Game *Beyond Good and Evil* was one of the first to fully embrace the concept of cooperation as a means for achievement within the game narrative, which has in turn led to the adoption of new cooperative models which have been embraced by the online games of today. Even many contemporary action games, with single-player emphasis on individual achievement, now provide a feature allowing for cooperative play with others locally or over the Internet.

The challenge offered by *Beyond Good and Evil* toward the pious convention of individuality over all else has largely been successful in encouraging a new gaming dynamic of cooperation into the videogames of today. Even if *Beyond Good and Evil* was not the “cause” of the recent rise in cooperation in videogames today, it certainly was one of the first games instrumental in demonstrating the possibility of cooperation, which is the mark of perspective by incongruity; the challenging of conventional assumptions in order to forge new conceptions.

Gendered war

As described earlier, the narrative of *Beyond Good and Evil* depicts a world in which a war is brewing. The overwhelming force of the Domz government and the resistance effort of the IRIS network offers an interesting dialectical tension for the player of the game. Engaging this dialectic with a critical lens allows the critic to deconstruct the gendered nature of the sides in this war which takes place throughout the game.

The appropriately named dominating Domz force embodies all that is traditionally masculine and patriarchal through its representation throughout the game. The Domz are ultimately controlling, forceful, violent, macho, and strong. They have little need for discussion or debate, preferring instead to decisively and forcefully eliminate those that would oppose their right to rule. The Domz control how people behave, limiting how they may speak and act, and punishing those who disagree with all available force. The state of Hyllis under Domz control is the picture of a fascist state, with governmental control over media outlets, all forms of commerce, the behaviors of its citizens, and the Hyllian war machine. The Domz government for all intents and purposes “invents” a war which requires the subservience of its citizens, a fact that is repeated through all media outlets by the government and greatly frightens its citizens. Throughout the game, the Domz forces embody traditionally masculine qualities in pursuit of their goals of domination.

On the other hand is the IRIS network which enlists Jade’s help to tell the stories of the injustice of the Domz government. The IRIS network represents all that is traditionally feminine. This concept is illustrated in that they rely on their intellect and not brute force; they rely on cooperation of silent forces in order to subvert the patriarchal force of the Domz; and they utilize relationships and discourse to oppose the encroachment of the Domz. The IRIS network appears weak due to its lack of armies or forces to engage the Domz in battle. However, the IRIS network depends on their ability to engage the minds and hearts of the citizens of Hyllis in order to cooperatively silence the voice of the seemingly superior Domz forces. Through the help of Jade, the IRIS network is able to expose the immoral and deceitful practices of the Domz government in rogue newspapers, thus changing public sentiment toward the Domz and their war against an invisible alien force.

The dialectical tension between these two factions changes throughout the game but remains a central facet of the game's narrative. At every corner, the Domz influence over the Hyllian planet is reified as a patriarchal and paternalistic force. As Jade travels the world, she bears witness to the encroaching power of the Domz in terms of military force and media presence. However, with the help of Jade, the IRIS network is able to uncover the deceit of the Domz and lead the people of Hyllis to rebel against the patriarchal authority of the government.

To this end, *Beyond Good and Evil* is quite unique among videogame texts in that the more masculine and patriarchal force is subverted and eventually defeated by the group embodying more traditionally feminine qualities. Conventionally, videogames tend to valorize the patriarchal and masculine qualities of characters and events in the completion of a game text. However, *Beyond Good and Evil* paints a quite different picture, challenging the conventional notions of power as a patriarchal force. By actively participating in the exposure and eventual subversion of the Domz government, the player embraces the more feminine position which topples its traditionally masculine and patriarchal counterpart, thereby restoring peace to the world of Hyllis. By including this gendered dialectical tension and resolving it in unconventional and impious ways, the game *Beyond Good and Evil* challenges the pious conventions of the industry through perspective by incongruity. The gendered war waged in the game serves to produce the foundations of new pious connections for traditionally masculine and feminine qualities and values.

Partial Perspective by Incongruity

Although the game *Beyond Good and Evil* accomplishes significant rhetorical work toward instigating a perspective by incongruity against the sexist forms of the videogame industry, it is certainly not perfect in its representations of gender, and that must be pointed out. The game has many elements that reify sexist conventions even though many aspects of the game serve to subvert them. I will now provide an example of how the game serves to perpetuate a patriarchal convention of the industry.

As Juul (2005) observes, part of the constitution of what makes a game is the reliance upon rule systems, and goal structures. *Beyond Good and Evil* is certainly no exception to this convention of videogaming as there is a clear goal structure and basis for achievement within the game. Players certainly advance and progress in terms of their skills and their knowledge of complex game systems as Johnston (2005) describes, but videogame narratives and worlds are not wholly dependant on the advancement of the skill level of the character. Skill and knowledge advancement are the primary means of achievement in games that are more strategic in nature, such as puzzle games, strategy games, or sports simulation games. In terms of action and adventure games (the genre of *Beyond Good and Evil*), skill advancement tends to represent a very small portion of the attainable achievement goals. In addition to skill advancement, the primary form of narrative and world advancement in these more action oriented games almost always involves some kind of hierarchal achievement.

This hierarchal achievement is based more often than not on the basis of gaining bigger and more powerful weaponry, greater explosive capability, or increased destructive power (Wolf, 2001). Every videogame in the first person shooter genre, for example, begins with the character possessing a very small and limited set of weaponry, normally a melee weapon such as a knife or a handgun such as a pistol. By the end of these games, however, the player

is able to utilize any number of high powered and destructive weapons so as to more quickly realize the goals of violence, such as a rocket launcher, a high-powered sniper rifle, or a futuristic weapon of even greater destructive force. This convention has become normalized as the form of advancement in videogames.

The point that I am trying to make here is that these games have a masculine hierarchal system of achievement through which players are forced to progress and involving the traditionally masculine goals of achieving greater firepower and destructive force. There is almost never a progression through videogames with emphasis on more traditionally feminine values such as greater social interaction or cooperative achievement. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Jade does receive more powerful weaponry with which to fight enemies. For example, her camera becomes an attack device capable of shooting projectiles at the targets in the viewfinder. Jade also receives upgrades to her hovercraft in which she attaches a cannon capable of disabling and destroying Domz robot sentries. The game reifies the masculine ideal of bigger, more powerful, weapons as the means for progression as a convention within the text.

I include this critique of the game to illustrate that the text is not somehow a “perfect” text that defies all conventions of the videogame and replaces them with more equitable practices and conventions. In this specific case, future game designers might spend substantial time rethinking the ways in which players advance through games in order to subvert the masculine ideal. What is important is that the rhetorical work of *Beyond Good and Evil* as perspective by incongruity is still quite potent, even though the game through other facets may serve to reify patriarchal or masculine conventions.

Looking ahead

In this chapter of the project I have sought to illustrate the ways in which the game *Beyond Good and Evil* and its protagonist Jade have served to subvert the traditional sexist conventions of the industry. To this end, I have illustrated the myriad ways in which the game begins the rhetorical work of perspective by incongruity against the formal conventions and pious notions of the videogame industry. In the conclusion chapter, I hope to utilize my findings from this analysis to make an assessment of how the rhetorical force of the game's perspective by incongruity may serve the game industry and its many followers in the future.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

It is easy to see why a game such as *Beyond Good and Evil* would fail to appeal to mass audiences. Through the creation and perpetuation of the conventional form of sexism constituted by the tropes of gender representation, the industry has illustrated its occupational psychosis in terms of gender representation. By this I mean that the forms of sexism of the industry have reconstituted notions of piety within the community of videogame designers and within a larger community of gamers. The enjoyment of many videogames today requires that audiences embody these orientations for the fulfillment of the forms of sexism. Therefore, a game like *Beyond Good and Evil*, that might serve to defy, and work to reconstitute these notions of piety, certainly could be met with rejection by the gaming community at large. Of course there are many reasons why videogames fail economically and otherwise which I will discuss in a moment. But if we focus for a moment on the cultural “work” of *Beyond Good and Evil*, which was the sole purpose of this project, we begin to see why audiences oriented toward these forms of sexism would find Jade as a character and *Beyond Good and Evil* as a game quite disturbing.

The fact of the matter is that videogame players of all demographic backgrounds are simply “used” to the sexist representation of women, which Burke would explain as a reflection of their cultural orientations. Hawhee (1999) points to Burke’s conception of the process of perspective by incongruity as one of struggle and violence as incongruous

perspectives clash. Thus the rhetorical work of Jade in opposition to the normalized orientations of videogame players creates a process of turmoil and discomfort for seasoned videogame players, who have orientations reflective of the conventional forms of videogaming. It is not difficult to imagine that gamers would be hesitant to approach texts that rely on this sort of rhetorical force in their appeal. The rhetorical force of *Beyond Good and Evil* challenges the very notions of what gamers find entertaining, engaging the recalcitrance of concretized orientations and perspectives.

Gaming communities therefore have had a great deal of difficulty comprehending *Beyond Good and Evil* due to the disruptive force of the game, which certainly might be reflected in its initial lack of popularity within these communities. But *Beyond Good and Evil* is much more popular now, three years after its release which begs the question of why this game is popular now? History has shown that even the most successful agents for social change whether actors or texts initially clash with recalcitrance from established discourses (Bowers, Ochs, & Jensen, 1991). This initial recalcitrance against the cultural change is not always indicative of the final reception and outcome. It is my belief that *Beyond Good and Evil* has taken a great deal of time to gain popularity as a reflection of its great cultural work, in that gaming communities had no conception of how to receive it immediately following its release, but have now embraced it and accepted it within the “canon” of the history of videogames. The changes proposed by perspective by incongruity are marked by a similar clash with the recalcitrance of the formalized orientations of the gamers as the audience and the occupational psychosis of designers as the industry. It is my belief that games such as *Beyond Good and Evil* will also bring with them the eventual acceptance, popularity, and change after engaging with this initial cultural recalcitrance.

Burke (1984) refers to the process of perspective by incongruity as “painful but creative” in that the process is difficult to work through, but one in which new perspectives are drawn (p. 245). The process of perspective by incongruity is one in which there is an initial recalcitrance, but a yielding, over time, to new perspectives. The prior summation of the process of perspective by incongruity might also serve as the description of the reception of *Beyond Good and Evil* as the game was initially revered by critics while being ignored by the gaming public. However, what has happened since is a resurgence in interest for the game and its engaging story. Small gaming communities around the world have begun to engage with the text and to lend it the attention that it has not received since its launch. There has been such a clamoring in fact, that it is now rumored that the creator of the game Michel Ancel is currently at work with a sequel to *Beyond Good and Evil*, which has reinvigorated interest in the original game (Ransom-Wiley, 2006). Now that the game is readily available on services like Gametap to millions of gamers, it has gained considerable attention as it has been featured in television and Internet ads. The game continues to grow its fan base which at the time of the game’s release was marginalized to obscure cult fans who along with critics had hailed the game’s benefits from the beginning.

In other words, the game is beginning to gain ground with audiences that it never originally penetrated. Therefore, the discursive effects of *Beyond Good and Evil* might only have begun to appear within the community of gamers and the community of developers and designers. In this way, the real effects of *Beyond Good and Evil* on the orientations of players and designers may not be apparent for some time. However, my analysis leads me to hypothesize about the discursive work of the game within these communities.

The Popular “Use” of Videogames

While videogames as “equipment for living” is the lens that I have appropriated for this study, it should be asked what kind of equipment these games actually provide. Who plays these games and for what purpose? These questions would undoubtedly draw unique answers from each gamer or game designer. I will not venture any complete answer in this project. However, this question proposes an alternative form of inquiry for the study of games, which does not directly involve the kinds of rhetorical messages that are somehow within the text, or within the minds of the creators. Instead what might be most interesting culturally about videogames is why certain games become popular and why other games do not. I have certainly posited in this study reasons for why *Beyond Good and Evil* was not received well initially in terms of sales verses other blockbuster games within the industry. But what of the games that utilize and perpetuate the sexist, racist, homophobic, heteronormative, etc. conventions of the industry? What does it say about American communities that these kinds of games are so readily accepted, while games such as *Beyond Good and Evil* which defy these conventions are met with recalcitrance?

I believe that future research might focus upon the ways in which individuals or communities “use” videogames. Utilizing the terminology of this study, what kind of equipment for living do certain videogames provide particular demographic, racial, socioeconomic, or discursive communities? In entertaining this question one might discover how videogames influence and entangle with the cultural backgrounds of certain communities or individuals and not with others. This kind of research may also serve to illustrate the specific cultural work of certain types of videogames with certain kinds of content or generic classifications. For Burke, perspective by incongruity is not a text, or a series of texts. It is an endeavor of the agency of audiences to utilize the content of art forms

such as videogames to enact real change in the world. It is therefore feasible that this kind of research may yield very different results for unique discursive communities.

Accordingly, the question of the use of perspective by incongruity and its acceptance is also pertinent. Gaming communities largely populated by women, (the girl gamer movement) have received *Beyond Good and Evil* in very positive ways, acknowledging not only its innovation and playability as a videogame, but also its work as an innovative force in the gaming world, standing as a model for better gender representation. Still other communities might engage with the perspective by incongruity offered by *Beyond Good and Evil*, and generate a great deal of resistance toward the changing forms that it promotes. Again, these concerns are not the focus of my project, but make for interesting research questions for the future.

Perspective by Incongruity for the Videogame Industry

The next step in understanding the force of perspective by incongruity is to illustrate its effects on the industry and/or the videogame complex as McAllister (2004) refers to it. Defying and reconstituting gender conventions by disrupting the orientations of players only takes the discursive significance of perspective by incongruity so far. As described previously in the method chapter however, videogames are not only a product consumed by an audience, but are also products that are designed by individuals with agendas and orientations of their own. How does perspective by incongruity serve to break apart and reconstitute the occupational psychoses of the game industry, including those surrounding the representations of violence, gender roles, sex, goal structures, and achievement structures? My answer is multi-faceted and branches off of the cultural and discursive paths if only briefly.

I have already illustrated in this project the ways in which a game like *Beyond Good and Evil* can serve to rhetorically operate as “equipment for living” by challenging the common assumptions of the orientations of videogame players. Videogames are first and foremost products produced with the intention of mass appeal and consumption. In other words, videogames are produced to be popular and sell millions of copies all over the world. This means that if gamers don’t buy a game, it never approaches the discursive power within the videogame complex as other games that are market successes do. The successful games therefore drive the industry, prodding gamers to expect the same kind of game, and designers to design them in a self-perpetuating cycle. This is a kind of natural market selection visible in any capitalist industrial market.

However, if games that begin the work of perspective by incongruity begin to make their mark culturally in the minds of gamers, then the audience itself will change what kinds of games they want to play, thus fundamentally shifting the demand for videogames. It is for this reason that I believe that *Beyond Good and Evil* is one step in a process of perspective by incongruity. It is one game that might change some of the conventions of the industry or the ways in which players approach games, but it cannot do all of this discursive work on its own. Many other games will find ways to challenge the conventions of the industry, engaging in perspective by incongruity. Then and only then, will the industry fundamentally shift the landscape of videogames in America. In the future, when many texts engage gamers’ orientations through perspective by incongruity, gamers will begin to demand different forms of content representing a shift in conventional form. If gamers don’t buy it, then it will not be produced.

Venturing further into the economic realm, there are a few ways in which games like *Beyond Good and Evil* may begin to exact change within the industry in terms of the people that make the games themselves. The videogame industry has been striving for years (even decades) to branch out from its target audience of young to middle-aged boys and men (Cassell & Jenkins 1999). The reasoning behind this desire for the videogame industry is simple; if you can open the market to women you are doubling your potential for sales. Many books such as Sheri Garner Ray's (2004) book Gender Inclusive Game Design have been written by game designers and critics alike with the intention of illustrating the vibrant market of female videogame players. The ways in which videogame developers have responded to the industry's call for action has been to dig further into the tropes of gender stereotyping in order to appeal to girls.

This line of logic has produced games that are overly stereotypical and heavily reliant upon traditional conceptions of femininity such as *Barbie Horse Adventure*, and *Hello Kitty Roller Rescue*. A recent study undertaken by Nakamura & Wirmen (2005) suggests that female gamers currently must find ways to negotiate the highly masculine play spaces of videogames by "counter-playing." Play spaces that embody only highly masculine values and in-game opportunities are in way hostile to female gamers that wish to open these spaces to allow for more feminine alternatives. As a reaction to the highly masculine play spaces, Nakamura and Wirmen illustrate that female gamers must first negotiate these masculine play spaces by "counter-playing" them, meaning that they must find ways to open these masculine spaces to alternative constructions, many of which are more inviting to female gamers. Nakamura and Wirmen offer their theory of "counter-playing" as an identified means of female gamers opposing the sexist spaces which all too many contemporary games

provide. Accordingly, the push to counter-play videogames for female gamers severely diminishes the experience, causing many female gamers to avoid gaming in a sexist environment all together. What seems apparent then is that if the videogame industry worked toward producing games like *Beyond Good and Evil* which serve to renegotiate the conventions of the industry, their games would appeal to a much greater degree toward female gamers, without stereotyping or feminizing the content. This provides female gamers with games that they do not have to “counter-play,” while offering a viable videogame experience for many audiences concurrently. In this way, games like *Beyond Good and Evil* may serve to reconstitute the industry in that games that are produced against the conventions of the industry would take popular root in new audiences, without resorting to the conventionalized forms and tropes of the traditional videogame market. Therefore, I do believe that games that begin or continue the discursive work of perspective by incongruity are economically viable, and are, in fact, what the industry has been looking for years in terms of the appeal to mass audiences rather than niche markets in regard to gender communities.

In the most general terms, perspective by incongruity is the driving force behind social and cultural change for Burke. Along the same lines, I believe that it is through perspective by incongruity that videogames may grow out of the narrowly focused occupational psychoses which currently drive the conventional forms of the industry. The lack of creativity that has plagued the industry in recent years is a direct result from the (over) utilization of the traditional conventions of videogames. Therefore the driving force behind new forms and additionally the means to address the lack of creativity of the industry lies within the creation of games that embody perspectives by incongruity. With this project I

have illustrated ways in which particular game texts partially accomplish this work. Future videogame texts may follow the same or create new ways to produce similar discursive effects. In any case, the future of videogames seems bright along those lines with new models of inclusive play being introduced constantly. The Nintendo Wii (pronounced “we” and referred to as such due to its appeal to numerous game audiences coming together) is an example of just such a new model that represents a perspective by incongruity not only through the games that are produced for it, but in the ways in which the hardware and software reaches out to numerous demographics equally.

By driving the industry to look outside of the conventional modes of creation, perspective by incongruity linked to all forms of representation, not only gender will usher in new eras of videogame representation and artistic forms. The rhetorical force of perspective by incongruity may be traced back through many games including the pivotal, if misunderstood videogame *Beyond Good and Evil*.

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